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Harkaway and the Bushrangers.



Mole grasped his rum bottle to defend himself.

CHAPTER I.

It was about five o'clock on a glorious morning when young Jack and his companions turned out; and then the stockman and his assistant proceeded to tend their cattle and turn them out into the rich and boundless pastures.

Mr. Mole, who still felt some effects from his last night's experiment in beverages, confined himself to tea, pure and simple, without making "into" robur.

By six o'clock they were ready for starting.

Jack and his companions were well-mounted on spirited horses of a breed not far removed from the pure English hunter, and such as would have been worth a good price in the old country.

The mounting of Mr. Mole, on the redoubted steed "Milk-and-Water," was, after all, a matter of no small difficulty.

It took the united efforts of Jimalong and Joe, assisted by Sunday and Monday, with suggestions from Jack and Harry, to secure the tutor safely on his equestrian perch.

The first attempt was so far a failure, that the

venerable Isaac, not being properly balanced, pitched off on the left side of the horse, and on the second he tumbled off on the right, still more heavily, and would have probably been not a little injured, but that he was providentially caught in the arms of the Prince of Limbi.

At length he was properly fixed, and in repose.

He certainly looked a very passable, if not a magnificent equestrian.

The big jack boots, drawn up to the thighs, and fastened there with straps, were so natural in

pearance, that no one out of the secret would have known but what they concealed real legs; or, to describe it in the facetious terms used by young Jack, no one would have supposed that "Mole's entire" was destitute of two leading members of the firm.

The proof of the pudding, however, is in the eating, and it remained to be seen how Mr. Mole would get on.

When the chase came to be in full swing, certain restless symptoms on the part of Milk-and-Water more than once made Isaac apprehensive that he was not so quiet a steed as his name and reputation would imply.

Little did he suspect that the animal in question was really one of the most spirited in Joe Freeman's whole stud, named indeed, "by the rule of contrary," and that Jack and Harry had connived at this heartless deception.

Jimalong now appeared holding with some difficulty four large dogs, a cross between fox and grey hounds.

The party had to get over some miles before they roused the game, notwithstanding that Joe had declared this region to be "chock full" of kangaroos, but at length a fine specimen of that tribe was discovered and gave hopes of some lively sport.

"A boomah—a boomah!" was now the cry, first started by Jimalong, whose savage power of eyesight enabled him to be the first to espy the game, and the dogs gave tongue at the same moment, as they also sighted it.

"Cobbon—good—good!" exclaimed Jimalong: "big kangaroo, ole man boomah!"

It was indeed a boomah, a magnificent specimen of the kangaroo tribe, measuring at least six feet in height, and mighty of haunch and extent of hind leg.

He was standing feeding upon a patch of long grass when he first became aware of his enemies' approach.

He instantly raised his head, looked around at them, paused a moment, and then bounded off in gigantic leaps of twenty or thirty feet each.

"Loose the dogs, Jimalong," cried Joe Freeman. "Now, then, my boys, sit fast, and prepare for a run; we're going to have some sport."

It was all very well to say "sit fast," but Mr. Mole, for one, could not well obey the order.

In the first place, his steed, Milk-and-Water, at the very first signal for the chase, started off like a war-horse at the trumpet of battle, giving his rider, who was not prepared for such a sudden movement, a considerable shock, and causing him to clutch the reins tightly.

As the horse quickened its pace, too, he found that, despite what he considered the security of its fastenings, he began to "joggle" and bump about in the saddle in a manner that was decidedly unpleasant, and such as he had by no means bargained for.

He could do nothing at all to control the steed, and his helpless wooden legs rattled, as he went, inside the big jack boots, like a thin rapier in the scabbard of a gigantic broadsword.

But Mole's courage did not give way yet, or rather, he would not show that he was frightened. So he forced his features into a smile, which was a ghastly imitation of enjoyment and high spirits.

"Tally ho—tally ho!" and away went the kangaroo, taking a downhill course, as these creatures generally do, for then their wondrous powers of speed are still further increased, and their enormous leaps even more extended.

No British red deer of old, with Robin Hood and his merry men behind him, could ever have been fleetlier than this Australian substitute for the former quadruped, to which, in size and color, he bore no slight resemblance, though the mode of progress was so different.

The dogs made after the game at full stretch, and the whole party were soon in the excitement of a rapid chase.

For a mile or two they seemed to be gaining on the kangaroo, whose pace seemed relaxing as if by exhaustion.

Jack and Harry thought the run would be a short one, after all.

Poor Mr. Mole, who got more and more uncomfortable as they proceeded, devoutly hoped that it would.

But Joe, as an experienced "kangarooer," knew the tricks of those animals too well for that.

"The crittur's only reserving his strength," he said; "wait till we gain on him a little more, and then see what a spurt he'll put on."

And indeed so it proved, for when the dogs seemed to be gaining on their prey, they sudden-

ly saw the animal turn, and hopping over a high bush, set off over the open ground at a pace greater than he had before attained.

It was indeed an exciting, an exhilarating race.

"Tally ho—tally ho!" again cried Joe Freeman.

"Tally ho—tally ho!" faintly cried poor old Mole.

As they proceeded they aroused other game.

The bandicoot and wombat, seeing and hearing the threatening cavalcade, scuttled back to their retreat.

Sometimes herds of kangaroos of the smaller kinds would be aroused and join the pursued one.

But the dogs, undistracted by these fresh objects of pursuit, ever kept their attention to the splendid quarry they were resolved on bringing down.

And how fared the gallant sportsman, Mr. Mole?

Every moment his fastenings seemed to become looser, the saddle harder, his imprisoned wooden legs more helpless.

Every moment Milk-and-Water behaved more like Mazeppa's famous Tartar steed.

"Not much milk-and-water about him, after all," thought Mr. Mole; "I begin to think he has been christened by the rules of the contrary, on the same principle as a six-foot prize fighter is called The Infant. Oh, dear, this is decidedly unpleasant. Oh—oh!"

It decidedly was, especially when the steed took to leaping over numerous fallen trunks or thick bushes, or edging so close against the trees that his rider had difficulty in dodging in time to prevent being torn or dragged by the branches, and each of such perilous escapes perceptibly loosened the fastenings that held him in his place.

In the wild hurry of the chase, the horsemen got often widely separated.

Milk-and-Water, entirely of his own accord, for his rider was to him a helpless burden, seemed determined to be ahead of the chase.

He shot on ahead of all his equine companions, and any spectator might have betted safely upon his being first at the winning post.

"Oh, I say, isn't Mole going ahead?" exclaimed Jack, spying him from a distance.

"Or rather his horse is," replied Girdwood; "I don't believe the old boy's urging him on; more the other way."

"Bravo, Mole—you'll be the first in the finish," shouted Jack, waving his hat, for he knew it was too far for his congratulations to be heard by their object.

Mole waved his cabbage-tree head gear in response, but in so doing struck it against a tree with such violence, that not only was the hat hopelessly smashed, but his hand also received a knock that made him roar.

He bent forward, clutching the mane and reins with all his might, for he felt the straps that had fastened his boots to the girths snap altogether, and his only hope of keeping on lay in his arms and hands.

Thus again he urged on his wild career, the boots dangling loose in the stirrups in a manner ludicrous to others, but not pleasant to the sufferer.

And a sufferer Mr. Mole certainly was.

An hour and a half had this exciting chase continued.

The kangaroo was showing unmistakable signs of exhaustion, the dogs were gaining on him, and at length there was a wild shout of triumph from the huntsmen when they perceived the foremost hound reach the quarry, which stood backed against a tree as if at bay.

"That's cooked him, I believe, my boys," cried Joe.

But it was not so yet; the kangaroo waited for his enemy to approach, and then simultaneously with the rush upon him, met the dog by upraising one of his hind feet.

With the long, sharp claw, the boomah, now towering up to his six feet of height, ripped up the flank of the poor dog, which, with a dismal howl, rolled backwards on the sward and expired.

The boomah then recommenced his flight, and ere the other dogs could come up, he was some distance beyond them.

"Oh, he's off towards the Wurree-Wurree river," said Joe, as he rode up to his companions; "he'll take to the water now. That's their last dodge, but it won't help him very much. I'm sorry for poor Ponto, though, and I shouldn't wonder if we lose another before we're done."

"By Jove! look at Mole now," cried Harry Girdwood; "he seems determined to top us all in speed."

"Milk-and-Water certainly is a devil to go,"

said the stockman, gazing admiringly at that flying steed. "Up to this I should always have laid odds on Wildfire, but Milky beats her."

Strange as it may seem, despite his perilous position, an exhilarated, triumphant, and ambitious feeling entered into Mole's heart.

He saw that he had distanced his companions, and he perceived that the kangaroo was nearing the water, where he would probably be at bay, and he saw not why he—even he, the unappreciated Isaac, should not be first in at the death, and even kill the kangaroo himself. It would be a glorious achievement, and one to talk of and enlarge upon forever afterwards.

He had a knife and a pistol, and it was indeed hard that the suffering he had undergone during their terrible ride should not be compensated by some triumph.

A fresh jerk of great violence, as his horse made a bound down hill, nearly unseated Mr. Mole in the midst of these rapid but inspiring reflections; and one of the jack boots, knocked out of the stirrup by the same movement, slid off, leaving one of the timber toes exposed, and greatly increasing the rider's peril.

The glistening silver winding of the Wurree-Wurree river now hove in sight, and the kangaroo, closely pursued by the remaining dogs, was making towards it.

Arrived at the bank, he made a mighty plunge, alighting about in the center.

The dogs were after him in a moment, and one swimming up to him, tried to fly at his throat, but the old man, now firmly planted upright on his place of vantage, his fore feet and the upper part of his body rising above the water, received the attack with the boldness of desperation.

Gripping the dog with his claws, he struggled not only to prevent being fastened upon, but to get the head of his assailant under water.

This, after a few minutes' struggle, and some injuries inflicted by the dog, the boomah accomplished, and the gallant beast's head was kept under until he was suffocated by the object of his pursuit, who had only two dogs to contend with.

Mole had little time for calm observation.

Hurried along breathlessly after the dogs, jolted right and left, and hanging on only by a miracle, he arrived at the bank of the river, Jack and the others being still a considerable distance behind him.

All resolutions as to what he should do next were put to a stop by the independent action of Milk-and-Water.

That spirited steed evidently had no great liking for the latter element, for no sooner had he reached the bank, than, resolving neither to enter the water nor to put up any longer with his useless rider, he made a halt so sudden, and kicked up hindward so vigorously, that Mr. Mole was jerked into the river as easily as a stone out of a sling.

He fell with a cry of alarm and surprise. The shock was all the more considerable as he was not prepared for it, and in fact for the moment he believed that he had had all the life knocked out of him.

In a few moments, however, he arose fully to the surface, and found himself within a few feet of where the kangaroo stood at bay, facing the remaining dogs.

Seeing the fate of their companions, these animals were rather chary of attacking their gigantic quarry, and indeed the boomah, now towering up as tall as a giraffe, at least in Mr. Mole's eyes, did look very formidable.

But the courage of Isaac at this sensational crisis reasserted itself, and he resolved to take the opportunity of killing the kangaroo, and covering himself with glory. Waving his knife with one hand, with the other, assisted by his wooden legs, he swam frog fashion up to the creature, and when near enough, aimed a stroke at it with the long, sharp knife.

But the kangaroo, taking him for another species of dog, or, at least, determined that, if possible, he should die in the same manner as the last assailant, began attacking him with his powerful fore feet.

In an instant the bosom of Mr. Mole's shirt was ripped up by the sharp claws of the kangaroo, and but for the undershirt, a deep wound would have been inflicted.

Then the infuriated animal fastened its claws on Mole's neck, and strove to get his head under water.

Mr. Mole was at his last gasp. He never dreamt "the old man had so much blood in him," (to quote our friend Macbeth) and he gave himself up for lost, and, regardless of valor, bawled out:

"Oh, why did I come hunting? Help—help!"

A report came from the pistol of young Jack,

who, with his comrades, had now reached the bank.

With excellent aim—and it was a dangerous experiment, considering how closely Mole was struggling with the animal—Jack leveled at the kangaroo's head, and so well did the shot take effect, that in a moment the animal relaxed its hold on Mole, and rolled over dead in the water.

The intrepid Isaac, breathless and exhausted, was soon lifted out of the water by Joe and Jim-along, and dragged up the bank.

"You've had a narrow escape, my friend, I can tell you," said the stockman. "Whatever made you get so close to the boomah like that? Why, you have got the courage of a giant, sir. I know I shouldn't like to do it, for the critter's a devil at close quarters."

"For Heaven's sake a glass of rum," gasped Mole; "I'm dying."

"Lucky I've not come unprovided," said Joe, the stockman, taking a flask from his pocket and holding it to the lips of Mr. Mole, which closed upon it, and for several seconds held it tight by the force of suction.

"Now land the game, boys, and let's cut it up," said the stockman. "We've had fine sport, barring the loss of the dogs, who were worth more to me than a dozen boomahs."

Under the influence of his favorite remedy, combined with the geniality of the Australian sun, Mr. Mole was not very long in recovering from the effect of his ducking, his fright, and his exhaustion.

At all events, he was able to take part in the species of picnic which followed.

It was a lovely and enjoyable scene, with the lofty forest trees towering above them.

Flocks of parrots chattered overhead, or flew whistling to and fro, their magnificent plumage glistening in the sunlight, and there was one bird, the organ magpie, that enlivened their picnic with a song as tuneful as that of the nightingale.

"This is delightful," said Mr. Mole, who still kept the rum-bottle all to himself. He had mixed it with water just to his own liking, though he drank out of the bottle. "Delightful—perfect paradise. Here's success to kangarooing."

"And to the health of the mighty hunter, Isaac Mole," returned Jack and Harry.

"And his horse, Milk-and-Water," added Joe, pointing to that animal, who was now tied up to a tree, and peacefully grazing.

"Well, I don't care what anybody says," protested the tutor. "I've done my duty as an Englishman. I consider I've won the honors of the day. Didn't I ride in front of all of you, and get in at the death first—didn't I grapple with the monster in a death struggle after he had killed two dogs, and finish him off with a blow of my knife?"

"Am not I the hero of the fight?" he added, after a pause.

"I rather fancy it was my shot that settled the kangaroo," said young Jack, quietly; "look, here's the mark where the bullet went through his head."

"Yes, but observe how his throat is gashed about," said the tutor. "I did that, at close quarters, and alone, my boy."

"More like where the dogs attacked him," said Joe; "you couldn't do much with your knife when we found you—much as you could do to keep your head above water—ha—ha!"

"Ah, well, for all you say, it was I that settled the kangaroo," said Mole, decisively, "and considering the size of the animal, and the run he gave us, that isn't so bad for the first day's sport for a new chum."

"A new chum!" exclaimed the stockman. "I thought you were an old hand, mate. Didn't you tell us you were over in the colony before?"

"I! When?" asked Mole, in surprise.

"Last night. You told us how you came over during the gold rush, and went to the diggings and got a nugget, and got robbed of it, and then went and captured two convicts with your own hands; don't you remember?"

"Impossible!" exclaimed Isaac. "I never could have made any such statement."

"You certainly said so, though," said young Jack. "Didn't he, Harry?"

"Of course he did," acquiesced Harry Girdwood.

"You're having a joke on me, I see," said Mr. Mole, adjusting his spectacles. "If I said all that, I must have been suffering from *delirium tremens*, or—"

"Tea and brandy, *alias* robur," supplied Jack.

"Hush, my boy, say no more, you hurt my feelings," said the tutor. "I fancy now that the tea was a little too strong. But after all, the adventures I told you were all true, only they hap-

pened to a second cousin of mine, and not to myself."

"By that line of argumenting, friend," observed the stockman, "you might describe how you won two great victories, and then say afterwards—All this is quite true, only it didn't happen exactly to me, but the Duke of Wellington."

A laugh was raised by this application of Mr. Mole's sophistry, and he felt he was rather getting the worst of the joke.

"No matter," said he, "a day will come, as they say on the stage, or rather, a day has come—a day of triumph for Mole—Mole, the great kangaroo hunter. Behold, here is the ocular proof."

And he swung around him the huge tail of the slaughtered animal.

"Ask me not to part with it," he exclaimed, rising excitedly in an upright posture. "I wish I had full use of my legs, I'd get up and try a *pas de joie*, I feel so delighted. Isn't it a magnificent one? six feet long at least! I'll keep it just as it is, so that nobody may doubt my statement as to the size of the quadruped it originally belonged to. I'll treasure it as my own life," he added, again swinging the formidable appendage in such a manner that Jack and Harry narrowly escaped getting a blow from it.

From this condition of exhilaration Mr. Mole passed to the opposite extreme of quiescence—in other words, he began to feel drowsy, and at last went off into a sound doze, with his back resting against a tree, the rum bottle in one hand and the kangaroo's tail in the other.

The others continued their conversation, when they were suddenly interrupted by a fearful sound proceeding from the thick forest behind them; it resembled the war whoop of the American Indian tribe.

Simultaneously, a long spear came whizzing into the midst of the seated circle, grazing the shoulder of Joe, but fortunately sliding on to the grass without injuring anyone.

"Natives!" exclaimed the stockman, starting to his feet: "look out, chums, they're upon us!"

Sure enough a crowd of dark figures, tall, muscular, and nearly naked, with frizzy heads and negro features, burst from the dense forest upon the party.

Armed with spears, boomerangs, clubs or waddies, these savages were evidently some of the most formidable and ferocious of their race.

The whites were on their feet in a moment—of course, excepting Mr. Mole—and drawing their pistols and knives, prepared for a fray, and a desperate battle succeeded.

The natives were recognized by the stockman as belonging to the Wurree-Wurree tribe, noted for being a scourge to the white settlers for their cattle-stealing propensities.

Instigated partly by hatred to the white men, but still more by a desire to possess themselves of the kangaroo they had killed, and if possible, some of the horses (which they used not for riding, but for cooking and eating), they had made this sudden attack on the unprepared party of picnickers.

Without firearms, it might be thought that the blacks stood no chance against the whites, but they so far outnumbered the attacked party, and were so dexterous with the spear, waddy, and boomerang, that the odds were nearly on their own side.

Many shots were fired, and seven of the savages fell dead or wounded, but Joe Freeman and his friends soon found that the game was against them.

At first the natives appeared to be easily driven off, but no sooner were they out of sight, than, sheltered by the trees, they deluged the whites with such a shower of spears and boomerangs, that it was only by a miracle they all escaped killing.

Pistols seemed useless against these agile savages, who seemed able to dodge bullets as easily as spears.

Jim-along, the "tame black" stockman, evidently thinking "discretion the better part of valor," made off at the beginning of the fray, though the two dogs, who seemed to delight in the scene, remained to take part in it.

At length, all the ammunition being exhausted, Joe Gale saw that further fight was useless, so he shouted to his companions to make for the horses before the natives could capture those animals.

All were in the saddle in a moment, (always excepting our friend Mole), and to lighten weight, the remains of the kangaroo were left behind, and the natives pounced upon them with a bowl of triumph.

The whites immediately spurred on their horses, the natives giving chase, yelling, screaming, leaping, and hurling their missiles after them until they were out of sight.

In this wild stampede—for which our friends can scarcely be blamed, for to stay longer would have been certain death—the redoubted steed Milk-and-Water was, like his master, left behind.

The natives thought they had got a prize in this fine animal, but no sooner did they untie the rope that fastened him, than he gave a mighty plunge, sent two of his would-be possessors sprawling, and set off homeward through the forest at a pace that rendered his capture hopeless.

The only remnant of the hunting party now left behind on the scene of action was the unfortunate tutor, Isaac Mole.

It is needless to say that Mr. Mole had been long ere this thoroughly aroused from his peaceful slumbers by the tumult going on around him.

For him to join in the fray was impossible; he could not then rise to his feet; all he could do was to bawl out loudly for assistance.

Never in all his wanderings did he feel more terror than when, as he lay thus helpless under the tree, he saw the whole lot of them intoxicated with their triumph over the white fellows, and their gallant capture of the boomah and a half empty brandy bottle, come dancing around him.

They yelled, they screeched, they made hideous grimaces, they joined in a savage chant, of which "Yah-lah-roo!" was apparently the chorus, and seemed determined to do their utmost to frighten old Mole to death.

This was not, however, the worst he anticipated, for he had heard terrible stories of the cannibalism of the natives, and beheld with a shudder the formidable grinders of the chief and his followers.

Not that we imagine that the spectacle of old Mole, with his wooden legs, his spectacles, and his scared and ghostly countenance, was particularly appetizing even to the cannibal mind, but he feared the worst, and grasped his kangaroo tail in one hand, and his rum bottle with the other, to defend himself with, if need were.

The wooden legs seemed to astonish the natives a great deal; they had never seen anything like them before, and they probably regarded the tutor as some sort of white monstrosity.

He endeavored by signs to make them understand his particular infirmity, and also to implore their pity, and to make himself better understood, he addressed them in a kind of broken or nigger English.

But this failed to make them "compreenny," and they jabbered away in their own tongue at a considerable rate as they crowded around him, pinched, poked and prodded his wooden legs, and tried to account for the phenomenon in their own way.

"Oh, Lor'," exclaimed Isaac to himself; "here's a fix! I wish I had a wooden body as well as legs, for then I shouldn't be able to feel the tortures I know they mean me to go through, and if they undertook to eat me, I should disagree with them."

"My good friends, niggers, men and brudders, please leab me alone. I no good to chaw—chaw at all, and you can have my two timber pins, since you've taken such a fancy to 'em, if you'll only spare my life."

"Kur-rur-wan-ran-kan!" was the chief's only reply to this appeal, and the words seemed to mean "lift him up and carry him to our tents," for that is what two natives, one taking Mr. Mole by the shoulders, the other lifting up the wooden legs, immediately proceeded to do.

One hungry-looking savage, with formidable teeth, made a sharp bite at one of poor Mole's wooden legs, but did not seem to relish the flavor.

It was no use to struggle; he was as helpless as an infant in their hands, and he could only appeal more loudly than before to their sense of compassion.

This, however, proved to be equally unavailing.

He was carried off into the woods by his captors.

The chief looking and gazing reflectively at the two new crutches which Mr. Mole had left under the tree.

The savage evidently thought they were some sort of weapons, but whether of the nature of a gun, a club, or a spear he could not make up his mind.

Poor Mr. Mole's rum bottle, with all its del-

icious contents, for he had not drunk half of it, fell as a trophy into the hands of the chief.

The group of tents, or "gunyahs" appertaining to the Wurree-Wurree tribe was situated in a very wild gully, or valley.

It was a wild and picturesque spot, but Mr. Mole was in no position to appreciate its beauties, which came upon his vision more in an upside-down view than otherwise.

For his bearers carried him—especially down hill—with his head hanging much lower than his feet would have been if he had had any.

A crowd of natives of all kinds, men, women, and children, surrounded the captive as soon as he arrived at the tents, and danced around him yelling, grinning, and altogether conducting themselves, in Mole's own words, as if they were not natives of Australia, but of Van Demon's Land.

The joke was perpetrated by Mr. Mole in describing the scene afterwards, for he was in no jesting mood at the time.

His firm belief then was that they intended to have him for supper, and that their "Yah-lah-roo!" was a chorus of delight at the prospect of eating a white man, and that his arrival was hailed as if he were provisions brought into their camp.

And the alacrity with which the natives began kindling a fire, evidently for cooking purposes, made him feel faint.

"This is queer treatment for a man who has graduated at an English university," moaned the tutor, as he lay thus. "Strange beings; they have let me keep my kangaroo tail. I should have thought they would have wanted it for soup. But I'll only part with it with my life, unless I can't help myself. Bless me, what's that smell of cooking?"

By moving a little he was able to see through a hole in the tent, and then perceived in the open space the natives engaged at their feast.

They had kindled a large fire, and were squatting around it.

The kangaroo haunch, cut up into huge steaks, was being griddled, or rather burnt, over the embers.

These children of nature were too impatient to wait until the meat was done through.

No sooner was it a little browned than they took it up, and gnawed some of it off as it was, and then put it back again to cook a little more.

This seemed to Mr. Mole a new and original way of dining.

It was with a pang of deep regret that Mr. Mole saw his favorite rum bottle being passed around from the chief to the warriors whom he most favored.

As the natives were thus enjoying themselves, their jabbering tones were gradually stilled.

This comparative stillness, combined with the heat of the day, was so lulling to Mr. Mole, that in a short time he actually went off into a doze, which imperceptibly became a deep slumber.

CHAPTER II.

A LADY FALLS IN LOVE WITH MOLE AND PROPOSES.

He was at length awakened by strange voices close to him, and found by the position of the sun that it was late in the day.

He still lay on a possum skin in the tent, and a group of natives were peering in at him grinning at the entrance.

Then it was that he first experienced a sense of loss, and next, to his inexpressible grief, realized what he had lost.

It was his kangaroo's tail!

"My tail, my kangaroo's tail, my trophy of the chase, and only memento of this glorious day," he exclaimed, sitting up; "who has taken it?"

The only reply was a shout of "Cobbon—cobbon; good—good!" from the blacks outside, who seemed to regard these excited observations with just the same delight as a child would the first speech of a parrot he was teaching.

"Where's my kangaroo tail?" shouted Mole; "do you understand? My kan-ga-roo tail."

Here the chief, for whom the other natives all made way, popped his woolly head, adorned with the cockatoo's feathers, in at the entrance, and said with a wide grin:

"Burra—burra, wa goo, tee-lang."

"Just so," said Mr. Mole; "I fully agree with your remark, only I don't enlighten me as to what end my tail has come to."

And he called out again:

"My kangaroo tail," louder than ever.

To which the chief replied, pointing suggestively down his own throat.

"Kan-ga-roo tail soup."

"Oh, it's made into soup, is it?" said Mole. "Well, it's a mean thing to come and take it from me when I was asleep; I ought to have had a voice in the matter. I should like to have some of it, at any rate. I'm getting rather hungry again; bring me some kangaroo tail soup," he added, with a gesture eloquently expressive of swallowing.

"Kan-ga-roo tail soup," echoed the chief, now evidently understanding him; "Yowi—Yowi."

And he gave order to his subordinates that the delicacy should be brought.

Instantly a particularly ugly native, bearing a mighty cauldron, probably stolen from some settler's hut, entered and approached Mole, the chief and several other warriors accompanying him.

"What's this?" cried Mole, looking in vain for the hot soup he expected.

For he saw nothing but a sediment of dark brown gelatinous substance, sticking to the bottom and edges, inside the pot, in which the marks of fingers were plainly visible.

It might have been humanly possible to scrape up a few mouthfuls of the horrid mess, but who was going to do it?

"Take it away," he cried, with a gesture of disgust.

"The greedy savages, they've eaten it all, and licked and clawed the saucepan so dry, that there's not much more than the smell left, and now they offer it to a white man. Ugh! perish the thought."

"Mor-ro-bung-keen!" observed the chief, grinning, and then he disappeared for a moment, and brought in a little wiry black, whose appearance and actions reminded Mole forcibly of his friend Nero.

"I'm Billygolong," he remarked, "tame black fellow; spick white man's lingo."

"Do you?" exclaimed Mole. "I'm glad of it; perhaps you'll be able to answer me a few questions. Do your tribe, yon black fellows—Wurree warriors—ahem—ever eat white man?"

"Ole chief," he said, "eat 'em up; other ole chief alive, he eat kangaroo."

"Well, that is an improvement, I must say," observed Mole; "to give up cannibalism is a decided step in the path of civilization. Won't your people let me go?"

"We gib up white mans," answered Billygolong, "if other white mans gib us sheep and bullocks."

"Oh! I see, I am to be kept as a sort of hostage till I am ransomed: just like those villainous brigands do in Greece. Who would have thought these black rascals had so much cunning? Do you always treat white men well?" he asked, doubtfully.

"We kill some and eat 'em," answered the native, with a grin, "if we don't get bullocks and sheep."

"The devil you do! I'm in danger of my life, after all. What can be done? I must say something to frighten them."

"Look here, you black fellow, it won't do for anything to happen to me here. Do you know who I am?"

The savage shook his head.

"I'm Lord Mole, chief medicine-man to the great white Queen of England; legs cut off in battle by Russian boomerangs. If queen finds you kill her medicine-man, she'll send hundreds—thousands white men, with thundersticks, and kill all black men; there!"

"Yowi!" exclaimed the native, evidently impressed by this threat, which he immediately communicated to the chief, who had some time before entered the tent with a colored lady of the tribe.

The chief, fully believing the exalted rank to which his prisoner laid claim, was resolved to increase the ransom he had intended claiming, but at the same time to take care of their captive and use him well.

It did not follow, however, that the means taken to do this were such as must please the object of their kindness. Mr. Mole soon found that their well-meant efforts were destined to place him in rather embarrassing positions.

In the first place, the native lady, who was the chief's sister, seemed inclined to pay him particular, though unwelcome attentions.

She could speak English about as well as Billygolong, and by this means was enabled to make her sentiments known to the captive, and also to overwhelm him with questions, which he could not always understand, and generally found a difficulty in answering.

"Me like white mans," she observed, with a look of tenderness that made Mr. Mole feel nervous. "Me marry once to black chief, he ill-treat me; beat me with waddy, till another black man speared him in forest, and he die dead."

"A widow, by Jove!" exclaimed Mole. "This is worse than all. Good gracious, the idea of my being at her mercy," and he gazed with awe upon her.

Truth to tell, the female aborigine is seldom very attractive in appearance, and if Kobba-wobba (that was her name) ever were so, it must have been a very—very long time ago.

She was tall, gaunt, and hard-featured, with a ring through her nose, and a mouth capacious enough to show that she had lost half her teeth at least, and what remained were as black as ebony, while, as her attire consisted principally in a possum skin cloak, which had seen considerable service, she was not assisted much by the advantages of the toilet.

"Me like white mans better than black mans," she repeated emphatically; "black mans beat lubras with a waddy, white treat lubras kind, not beat them."

"Don't they, though?" returned Mole. "I rather doubt it; there's plenty of wife-beating in some parts of England, by all accounts."

"So," proceed Kobba-wobba, with still greater emphasis, "me wish a good deal to be lubra of great medicine man of great Queen of White-land."

"That's rather cool for this hot climate," said Mole to himself. "Madame, I grieve to say that circumstances render it impossible that—bless me, what am I talking about—the fact is, Kobba-wobba, I couldn't marry you, I have one, two, three lubras already."

"White lubras?" she asked, anxiously.

"Black, nigger black, though they're not natives here; but if they thought I even dreamed of looking out for you, they'd murder me and you as well if they got the chance."

Kobba-wobba still asserted her preference for a white husband.

Mr. Mole determined to humor this impression.

"I think I know of a white man that will suit you exactly. He is very young, great warrior, wonderfully handsome, with whiskers of golden color, great chief of the white queen's army—much money, red coat covered with gold."

"That good," said Kobba-wobba, with much satisfaction, "that very good; what him name?"

"General Walker," replied Mole; "he's a particular friend of mine."

"Waw-ker, me remember dat; where he stop now?"

"Well, he's some distance off; but if you'll do all you can to get me well treated by the chief while I'm here, and persuade him to let me I'll find him out as soon as ever I get free—send him to you."

The effect of this agreeable fiction upon the simple savage was very conciliating, and Mole was glad to find he had made a friend of Kobba-wobba, as well as of her brother, the chief, who, by the way, rejoiced in the high-sounding epithet of Kul-la-ba-long-tee-boo.

Mr. Mole's appetite returning after a time, he wished very much that the natives would bring him something palatable.

This desire he expressed to Billygolong, who responded:

"Iss, gone to get some; see black chief come, bringing something a good deal nicer for white man."

And Mole saw the chief again entering the tent, carrying a tin dish containing something of strange shape and color, smoking hot, and slightly resembling small sausages.

"Thanks; but what is it?" asked Mole, raising himself into a sitting posture, and with a look of distrust. "Heaven, why, it looks like—"

"Nice fat young snakes, roasted," explained Kobba-wobba, "chief got 'em from under big gum tree, beautiful, nice as a kangaroo."

Sure enough, Mr. Mole realized to his horror, that the contents of the tin dish were about half a dozen large sections of the juvenile serpent, browned over the fire, giving forth a savor not unpleasant, but most repulsive in idea.

Mr. Mole actually fancied he saw them writhing about as if they were alive.

"So nice!" exclaimed Kobba-wobba, holding them towards Mole, and turning them over with a knife.

"Ugh! take it away," cried he, scowling in horror.

The black looked surprised; he was rejecting what was considered a great delicacy by the Australian natives, and the chief had himself taken considerable trouble to catch and kill a snake for the purpose of giving their guest a treat.

He could not understand the objection to the delicious food which "goes down like marrow" in the opinion of the native epicures, and could

only suppose that Mr. Mole was merely standing on ceremony, and wanted a little coaxing, which he left to the feminine blandishments of Kobba-wobba.

"Come, must eat it, white man," said she, persuasively, selecting the largest piece! "eat all up quick, nicer than 'possum, or quail, or sheep-flesh; black fellow eat many—many."

"Let 'em," almost shrieked Mole, "but I can't; I'll die of hunger first; take the horrid thing away."

Not only persuasion, but force, was now employed, for by the direction of the chief, Billygolong held firmly the head of the unfortunate Mole, while Kobba-wobba proceeded to feed him.

On seeing the loathsome object so near him, Mr. Mole struggled, tried to push back the hand that held it, but the chief, seizing his arm, prevented this.

Mole closed his eyes in horror, and opened his mouth to give vent to ejaculations of disgust.

This was the very worst thing he could do, for it gave the chieftain an opportunity.

As soon as he felt the hot meat touch his palate, he gave a complete shriek of horror.

"Phew!" he spluttered out, "I won't eat it. Murder! Help! I shall be choked, poisoned!"

And with a violent effort he succeeded in riding himself of the nauseous mouthful, just in time to prevent it slipping down his throat.

"Oh, I'm so sick!" he cried, "can't eat snake, snake kill white man. If I eat it, I shall die at once."

Kobba-wobba's compassion was now so far aroused, that she desisted in her efforts, and gave the dish of delicacies back to the chief, who received it with evident reluctance.

Billygolong, who seemed to be a recognized "snapper-up of unconsidered trifles," pounced upon the rejected snake as it lay upon the ground, threw back his head and swallowed each piece at a gulp, much as a white man would an oyster.

The chief now went out to find some other food that might better recommend itself to the taste of the white fellow.

What could be more delicious and acceptable than a fine iguana, or eatable lizard?

They abounded in that neighborhood, and could be killed and cooked in a very short time.

There was one crawling up one of the gum trees; down he must come.

Kul-la-ba-long-tee-boo took aim, and threw his boomerang gently; it went about twenty feet into the air, whirled around, and descended, whizzing close to the tree, and bringing down the lizard with it.

A sable warrior ran to pick it up, and handed it to the chief, who ended its dying agonies with his knife, prepared it for cooking, stuck a skewer through it, and then gave directions for it to be grilled over the fire.

It was not long before this new delicacy was brought in whole to the hungry tutor; but, hungry as he was, he was not quite far gone enough to "tackle" the unpleasant object before him.

He had heard of the delicacy before, and saw no reason but prejudice why it should not be really good eating; but when he saw this specimen of the ugly reptile, looking for all the world like a young crocodile, his antipathy was so great that he could no more touch it than he could the worm.

"Pah! away with it!" he cried. "What will these savages be bringing me next, I wonder? Broiled nigger, I expect!" and then, looking around, and feeling the necessity of conciliating his sable friends, he said:

"No—no; too rich; too good for white man. White man ill, stomach weak, die if he eat lizard."

The chief murmured: he was beginning to be tired of this.

This second refusal was too much.

It was "the last straw that broke the camel's back" of his patience.

For the last half hour he had been trying to please a man who seemed determined not to be pleased.

The idea of anyone would not eat snake and who would not eat lizard.

What would he eat?

Didn't he deserve to be left to starve?

Kul-la-ba-long-tee-boo, however, resolved to give Mole one last chance for his life.

Yes, Mole should have one more chance—one more dainty dish should be provided for the white man, and if he could not eat that, he might starve.

It was now getting towards night, and the denizens of the forest were beginning to think of rest.

Flocks of parrots, and other birds were re-

turning homewards, flying over the trees close to the tents.

The chief, scarcely moving from the entrance of his tent, stood watching a large body of these parrots, until they were close over his head, and then hurled his boomerang into the midst of them.

The whole flock flew off, screaming in a deafening manner, but one parrot came fluttering to the ground, struck by the sharp missile.

A native boy picked up the fallen game, and brought it to the chief, who, by way of recompense, handed the cooked lizard to the lad, who proceeded with one of his companions, delightfully to devour it.

The bird was then plucked, drawn, and cooked, and Mr. Mole was at last gratified by a smoking dish of roasted parrot.

He contrived to enjoy it very much, and the natives took such a great interest in the affair, that a number of them crowded around him all the time, jabbering and gesticulating in a manner almost enough to frighten away a white man's appetite altogether.

But Mr. Mole was becoming hardened under such influences.

By this time it was night, and the moon shone overhead, but it was often clouded.

But the large fire of logs gave such a spreading and ruddy glow that all the gunyahs were more or less illumined by its beams.

By this light Mole was enabled to perceive that a considerable amount of bustle and preparation was going on in the camp, and the sable warriors seemed particularly attentive to their weapons and their own personal adornment.

"What is going to happen now, Billygolong?" asked the prisoner of that agile attendant.

"Grand corroboree," replied he; "black fellows dance and fight, and do big jumps."

"Ah! I've often thought I should like to see a corroboree," cried Mole; "I understand they paint themselves before they dance."

"Iss—iss, paint very much," replied the savage.

Kul-la-ba-long-tee-boo just then entered the tent, carrying a species of palette, formed of the bottom of an old tin can, on which were a variety of mysterious pigments, and a sort of reed that served as a paint brush.

The aboriginal warrior threw aside his opossum cloak, and appeared with his finely-proportioned and slightly-tattooed form uncovered, save by a broad girdle of kangaroo skin.

In this condition he commenced besmearing himself with some of the paint first.

He enlivened the proceeding with an eccentric dance, perhaps in order to make the paint dry quicker; and when the first coat was set, he touched it up with some dabs of a livelier color.

At this stage, Kobba-wobba was called in to put the finishing touches with a delicate brush, formed from the paw of a kangaroo rat.

Mr. Mole watched these operations with considerable interest, reflecting what an amount of trouble people, both savage and civilized, are apt to take in order to make themselves look hideous and unnatural.

But all his cogitations were upset, when he perceived the object of his regard coming towards him, accompanied by Kobba-wobba, with the brush and palette in her hands.

"Now white's man's turn," she said, "paint all over, and look much pretty."

"Heaven! you don't intend to adorn me in that style, I hope!" exclaimed Mole.

"Iss—iss," said Billygolong; "chief say white man must put on paint for grand corroboree."

"But I can't take part in the corroboree," protested the tutor. "I'm not a native; I'm an outsider, and, besides, how can I dance without any legs?"

All his objections, however, did not move his captor.

He ordered Billygolong to hold him, while he himself stood ready to assist with his mighty strength in bringing the prisoner to reason.

But Kobba-wobba, as soon as Mole was seated, stripped to the waist, and securely held in the clutches of Billygolong, behaved in a manner that surprised her native friends.

She thrust her painting materials into the hands of the chief, and fell on her knees at the feet of Mr. Mole—or rather where the feet of Mr. Mole should have been, for it was the strange absence of those extremities that excited the admiration of Kobba-wobba.

She lifted both wooden legs with such haste that poor Mole was nearly thrown backwards, and in great alarm shrieked out:

"What are you doing, woman? Don't kill me."

"No kill, much lub. How you get wood feet?"

You much berry big chief; much dance wid strong leg—not get tired."

"I am tired of this kind of life," groaned Mole in bitterness of spirit, for while Kobba-wobba was admiring his legs, the chief had commenced putting a fresh coat of paint on the white man's chest.

"You lub Kobba-wobba?" asked the woman with a sigh.

"No!"

"You try—hab Kobba-wobba for lubra—what you call wife; den we hab pickaninnies wid stick legs all same as great white chief."

"I won't! I forbid the banns! I've been married a great deal to much in my lifetime, and I call you all to witness I'll never marry that woman."

"I paint you much beau'ful—den you lub me."

"Never!—and I won't be painted," cried Mr. Mole.

However, it was decided that Mr. Mole must be painted at all risks.

Objections were useless, only serving to irritate his captors, and render them more violent.

The chief went all over Mole's chest, arms and back with his large brush, which he dipped in the glutinous kind of black paint.

He was obliged to submit to being daubed over with this material till his whole complexion seemed changed.

Actors have assured us that nothing is more unpleasant than painting and gluing their faces preparatory for pantomime or burlesque make-up; what must Mr. Mole, then, have felt when not only his face, but his body and arms, were thus encrusted with an offensive pigment?

He narrowly escaped getting some in his eyes, and when the operation was completed and he was held up to dry, he experienced a sensation of mental and bodily anguish, which outdid all his previous experiences.

The coat of paint did not take long to get dry, and then it felt as stiff and uncomfortable as a suit of armor, and Mole, the warrior, could hardly move.

But his tortures had not ended yet; as soon as it was ascertained that the coating had set, that female artist, Kobba-wobba, stepped forward and commenced adorning Mr. Mole's unfortunate carcass and countenance with a choice pattern of her own invention, in no less than four bright colors.

Isaac submitted to this operation with all the fortitude at his command, though his modesty was shocked.

Kobba-wobba, on the contrary, seemed delighted with the task, and gave her client such a variety of elaborate embellishments, that he declared, when it was done, he felt and looked exactly like a newly-hung wall paper.

All the time the sable lady was going into exclamations of delight at the beauty of her own work, and when completed, she was in such an ecstasy of delight and pride, that she finally threw down her implements and danced for joy, exclaiming:

"Cobbon—cobbon! Good—good!"

"I wish you felt like I do, old girl," said Mole, "and you'd be more likely to say bad, very bad. Well, if this isn't a world of suffering. Ah, what is coming now?"

The chief entered, with an enormous head-dress in the form of a wig, evidently manufactured from the frizzly heads of some slain enemies, crested with a plume of parrot's feathers.

This they fixed on Mr. Mole's head, by tying it under his chin.

An opossum cloak was now thrown over him, and he was lifted on an old wooden chair, probably stolen from some settler's hut.

In this guise the tutor, now to all appearance a superannuated native, was carried out of doors and set down under the gum trees with the other spectators who had assembled to witness the corroboree, Billygolong still by his side to guard him.

The tribe began with a series of shrill yells, accompanied by violent gesticulations, beating of drums, the clatter of sticks together, and the whizzing in the air of pieces of wood fastened to a string.

This was the overture, and a very hideous and discordant one it was.

After that, the first party of performers rushed in with a wild war-whoop, and commenced dancing around the fire.

Never had the venerable Isaac Mole, in the whole course of his experience, seen such dancing or such dancers.

With clubs in one hand and boomerangs in the other, the sable warriors capered around and around and to and fro, sometimes like street niggers in a break-down, sometimes as wildly as the dancing dervishes of Persia, and sometimes, of-

tener than all, like lunatics, or the witches in Macbeth.

Then the savages, after a short interval, began again, increased in numbers by another party, whom they soon engaged in a spirited sham-fight.

With a yell of defiance and a loud clatter of weapons, the two parties rushed together in close action.

From the fierceness of their manner and speech, Mr. Mole supposed that they really had quarreled, and intended to have it out to the death.

At length one party of combatants had to give way; they were driven from the field, and their opponents pursued them with yells of triumph.

Both soon disappeared in the darkness of the forest, but sounds of shrieks and groans, blows and clashing of weapons, convinced Mr. Mole that a fearful massacre was going on out of sight.

"Good gracious!" he exclaimed, "is that the way you black fellows have a friendly dance, by pitching into each other in this murderous style?"

"Yowi, iss, iss," answered Billygolong, with a wide grin, "always so at corroboree; but don't kill-kill, only make believe."

"It's too much like reality, though, for my taste," mused Mole, "and I shouldn't much care about being in the thick of the battle. Halloo, here they are again, and they don't seem much damaged either. I wish I could run away."

"Great kangaroo-dance come nex'," observed Billygolong, who was as good as a programme.

The whole body of warriors now reappeared, having apparently made up their quarrel without bloodshed, and commenced some fresh gambols.

The men threw aside their weapons, drew up their arms into the smallest compass, and commenced hopping like kangaroos.

The imitation was wonderfully life-like, and the immense leaps given by each didn't fall far short of those performed by the genuine animals.

Mr. Mole was reminded of his recent hunting achievements.

These personators of the kangaroo, to render the thing more natural, had tufts of grass in their mouths, on which they pretended to be quietly feeding when they were disturbed by the other warriors, armed, and hopped away in a manner wonderfully true to nature.

Hitherto, not more than half of the force of the tribe had engaged in the revels, the remainder being seated among the spectators under the trees, wrapped in their opossum cloaks.

Suddenly, at a thundering signal on the drum, these started up, threw aside their cloaks, and with a wild "Whroo-whroo!" began a demoniac witches' dance around the fire.

Mr. Mole gave an exclamation of astonishment at their ghastly appearance, for they had painted ribs and bones, in white, upon their bodies and limbs, which, by the darkness of the background, gave them just the aspect of a lot of animated skeletons.

"Deadman's dance," explained Billygolong. "Dat am splendid!"

"Bless my soul! what an idea," exclaimed Mole. "Puts me in mind of Holbein's 'Dance of Death,' in which, I remember—"

But at this moment he felt himself seized behind, and ere he could object, he and his chair were lifted aloft on the shoulders of four stalwart aborigines.

"Here, I say," cried Mole, "you'll break my neck; do please be careful."

The savages then carried him towards the fire. Not doubting that they intended to offer him up as a burnt sacrifice, Mole objected strongly by a series of passionate protestations.

"My good-looking friends, what are you about, pray? Understand I object to being burnt; let me down; I'm a free-born Englishman; let me down, I say!"

His words were drowned in the yells and shouts of barbarous triumph that rang out from all sides; his struggle was in vain, and as he was carried more than five feet from the ground—a distance to fall, which would seriously damage a wooden-legged man—Isaac felt that the best thing he could do was to hold on to his seat.

The natives underneath now commenced a wild dance, which had the effect of making Mr. Mole feel as if he were mounted on a kangaroo or a giraffe, or out at sea in a washing-tub during a storm.

How he managed to keep his seat was a mystery. The music struck up louder than ever.

Every sitting warrior arose, like a giant refreshed, and commenced fresh gambols; the old chief, with the bound of a kangaroo, suddenly leaped into the circle of the dancers, brandishing his powerful waddy, and shouting "Yal-lul-lul-lul!"

Mr. Mole was carried around and around the

huge camp-fire till he felt quite giddy, and expected, every moment, that they intended to tilt him into it, and burn him like an Australian Guy Fawkes.

It was, at least, evident that this part of the performance was meant for his especial behoof, for the wild songs and yells were directed towards himself.

For a considerable time his bearers stood still, holding him as high up as they could, whilst all the others danced around.

No one, ever acquainted with our old friend, Isaac, could possibly have recognized him as he looked on that memorable occasion.

Black all over the face and body, with crescents, stars, and stripes in white and red ochre, and an enormous woolly wig crested with feathers, and an opossum cloak concealing his lower extremities, he sat, the center of attraction to a group of yelling and dancing savages, in the red glare of the forest fire.

Isaac Mole, indeed? Why, he looked far more like the great Panjandrum himself, with all his worshippers around him.

"I do believe they take me for some white divinity," he thought, "and are chanting hymns of praise to their idol. Misguided beings!"

His bearers now set into motion again, and recommenced a rapid walk around the fire.

It grew into a run, and then to a gallop.

Every moment Mr. Mole expected to be pitched out of his seat, while the deafening discord in his ears, the wild scene before him, fright, and the rapidity of the jolting motion, almost drove him distracted.

At length he felt he could endure it no longer.

The chair jolted till it was impossible to retain his hold, and with a cry of horror, out he fell on to the ground close to the fire.

In a moment he felt his woolly wig in a blaze.

Poor Mole gave himself up for lost.

But a black fellow promptly extinguished the flame of the burning head-dress, and then he was once more seated under the gum tree.

That was Mr. Mole's last ordeal that night, for the savages were tired out with their exertions, and throwing themselves around the fire, soon fell asleep.

Mr. Mole quickly followed their example.

How long he had slept he knew not, but he was awakened by a hand being placed firmly over his mouth.

"Hush! not a word, if you value your life," whispered the owner of the hand. "It's Harry, who has come back with Jack and the stockman to save you."

Then a moment afterwards came the words:

"Rise up and walk between us as quietly as a cat on velvet."

Mole obeyed, and, luckily, was too bewildered to speak or make any outcry.

He rubbed his eyes and looked.

Yes, there sure enough were the two boys, and two paces off the stockman, with a brace of loaded revolvers in his hands.

Quietly as possible they walked till they were quite a hundred yards from the camp.

There they found half a dozen other well-armed men who had been collected by Jack's friends to rescue the white prisoner.

They had even prepared a horse for Mr. Mole, with another pair of boots for his unlucky wooden legs to be inserted in.

Mount and away was the word.

But unluckily, before Mr. Mole could be properly fixed in the saddle, one of the horses gave a loud neigh.

The natives heard it, and with loud yells started in pursuit.

"Make haste, sir. Up with you."

The savages were in sight now, for the moon had arisen, and as soon as they saw the white party, they commenced to throw boomerangs and spears.

But a few shots checked their advance, and Mole having been "fixed," away went the whites, soon leaving the savages behind.

After a ride of three hours they reached a station, where, after a hearty laugh at Mole's plight, he was cleansed and supplied with garments. They rested till daylight, and then after a hearty breakfast, started for the Harkaway settlement.

The relation of their adventures caused some excitement there, and the description of Mole in his war paint was a theme of mirth for many a day.

CHAPTER III.

ROOK'S TROUBLES—MORGAN AGAIN—A DESPERATE PLAN—TINKER VANISHES, LEAVING ROOK IN TROUBLE—HOW HILDA WAS CARRIED OFF.

WE will now look after our old friend Jack and his party in their new camp.

All went well, and everybody looked happy, and hopefully regarded the future.

Everybody but one man.

Rook!

He had weighty matters upon his conscience. Harkaway had given him a splendid chance of beginning life again and redeeming the past.

How had he profited by it?

In a way that made him feel ready to put the muzzle of his rifle into his mouth and blow his brains out.

He had acted as a fool as well as a traitor.

"When I think that I was idiot enough to listen to Morgan," he muttered, as he walked along by the river's bank, "when I reflect on the shallow trap into which I fell, I could put an end to myself."

"Yah—yah!"

A low nigger chuckle came from the shrubs skirting the river, and out popped Tinker.

"Morning, Massa Rook," said Tinker, nodding gaily.

"Rather late for morning, Tinker," returned Rook, giving him a sharp, scrutinising glance.

"Yes—yes," said Tinker, looking down thoughtfully.

And then, suddenly looking up, he faced Rook, and said:

"Nice man, Captain Morgan."

Rook started.

"Morgan! How should I know?"

Tinker chuckled.

"You know bery well, I know bery well."

"What!" said Rook to himself, "is it possible that this nigger is one of Morgan's spies in the camp all this while?—oh, impossible."

"Massa Morgan coming presently; he come to frighten old Mole—yah—yah!"

"I don't know Morgan, nor anything about him," returned Rook, coldly, "and I don't want to know him."

"Oh, yes, sar, you do; you know all about him, you know well; him robber, bushranger."

And he nodded with such significance that Rook began to feel uncomfortable.

He reflected awhile.

A hundred thoughts chased each other through his mind at once.

"I'll go to Mr. Harkaway and tell him everything," he said; "he'll forgive me again, I know well. He'll help me to keep straight—he'll—"

"Oh, golly—golly!" cried Tinker, suddenly, and disappeared.

Two men had crept from behind the trees before Rook could perceive them, and stood before him.

Their appearance was so sudden that he was considerably startled.

Yet not more so than when he recognized their voices.

"Rook," said the nearest to him.

"Captain Morgan."

"Quite an unexpected meeting, is it not?" said the notorious bushranger, with a quiet smile. "We have lost sight of you of late. What is the best news?"

Rook hung his head, but made no answer to this.

"Do you hear?"

"Yes, I hear," returned the ex-convict, coldly, "but I have no news to give you."

"Indeed," said Morgan; "what a precious slow place this must be for one of your sort."

Rook beat the ground impatiently with his foot for several minutes, while he summoned up courage.

At length he burst out:

"You must not look to me for assistance any more," he said, violently. "These people have shown me all sorts of kindness, and I will not betray them."

Morgan frowned.

"Hold you mutinous tongue, Rook!" he said, in a voice which made the ex-convict feel very uncomfortable. "If I see any signs of disaffection amongst my people, I have a swift and sure means at command for putting an end to it."

Rook glanced around.

Morgan had got a revolver pointed at him.

"I don't know what you mean," he said, faintly: "I owe you no allegiance."

The bushranger gave a hoarse laugh.

"No allegiance!" he cried; "why, what do you mean, confound you? Why, I must be growing patient in my old age. I've put a bullet into many a man before now for less than that."

Rook made no reply.

The captain of the bushrangers had a trick of manner about him which cowed the ex-convict.

And Morgan knew it.

He knew well that he held the power over him which a strong mind always exercises over a weak.

"Look you here, Master Rook," said he, after awhile, "you are a simpleton, and you're young in my service, so I overlook what you have said. But I have this to tell you, and you will please look upon my words as orders, not to be lightly played with."

A retort rose to the ex-convict's lips, but he repressed it.

"I haven't depended upon your assistance alone here; I have others in the settlement upon whom I rely for information."

"Spies?"

"Eh!"

"Others!" said Rook, with a start; "who can it be?"

"That is my business; I have my spies, as you are rude enough to call them. Well, it pleases me to fancy the good looks of Mrs. Harvey."

"Who?"

"The beautiful Hilda. Well, within a few minutes, she will be in my power. Don't look alarmed. You will have to render some assistance."

"I?"

"You."

"Not I; I swear—"

"Silence! make no remark, but listen. She has now set out with her daughter, and is walking by the river-side. All you have to do in the matter, is to go to the girl—Emily, I believe she is called—and say that her father has sent for her; make some excuse, and that I leave to your fertile invention, for getting her away from the others—from her mother. I will see to the rest with my men, who are waiting even now with the boat."

Rook shook from head to foot on hearing this.

But he was silent.

"Now go," said Morgan, sternly; "that way—quick, and remember what you have to do."

Rook stared upon the ground, but said never a word.

He paused irresolutely for a while, and then, without raising his eyes, he walked off sharply in the direction indicated by Morgan.

"What shall I do first?" he said to himself; "go to Mr. Harkaway or to Mr. Harvey, or shall I first warn them? While I am gone to Mr. Harkaway, the mischief may be done; no, I had far better seek them and—"

As he thus soliloquised, he came suddenly in sight of two ladies, strolling along the water-side.

A thrill of terror shot through him as he recognized the people of whom Captain Morgan had spoken.

Mrs. Harvey and her daughter, little Emily.

He did not wait an instant, but flew to them, and bade them get back to the camp with all haste.

His manner appeared wild, and his voice incoherent; and at first they could scarce make out what he meant.

"Be off," he exclaimed, in an excited undertone. "Run—fly for your lives. A moment more and it will be too late."

"The poor man is mad," said Mrs. Harvey to herself.

Rook saw by her half timid look and shrinking manner, what was passing in her mind.

"I am as sane as you are," he cried; "fly for your lives, I say. Morgan, the bushranger, and his men are hovering about."

"Morgan?" ejaculated Hilda, in terror.

"Yes."

"Come, then, Emily—quick, dear," said Mrs. Harvey; "fly back to the house as fast as your legs will carry you."

Emily ran off like the wind.

But her mother, who was less nimble, had not got three yards, before Morgan and his men pounced upon her.

"Not so fast, my pretty one."

"Help—help!" she shrieked.

"Come—come, my lovely one," said Morgan, "don't fear me. I mean no harm."

"Help—help!"

Morgan now began to fear that her cries would be heard.

So he lifted the struggling Hilda in his arms, and hurried her away in spite of all her wild efforts to disengage herself.

Meanwhile Rook had made desperate attempts to raise the alarm in the camp.

He ran on a little way, and blew loudly upon an alarm-whistle.

Still no one appeared to respond.

Hilda's shrieks for help were now piteous.

So the ex-convict, Rook, casting off all con-

siderations for himself, rushed to intercept the bushrangers.

Morgan was making good progress with his struggling victim, while his men were following close behind, to oppose anybody.

Rook dashed after them.

"Stop, villain!"

Then he seized Morgan by the collar and swung him around, and Hilda was free.

But, before she had got three steps, Morgan clutched her again.

At the same moment he whipped out a pistol and presented it at Rook.

"Traitor!" he cried, "take your death."

Click! a flash in the pan.

"Confusion!" angrily cried the bushranger chief.

"Help—help!" exclaimed Rook, wildly; for he now saw the hopelessness of attempting to cope with such odds.

Still he thought to detain them until assistance should come to him.

"Help—help! Harkaway to the rescue!"

He rushed again at Morgan, but the latter met him with a blow from the butt end of his pistol, so well directed that it stretched Rook upon the ground.

At this instant, shots were heard in rapid succession, at no great distance from the spot.

Rook heard them ere his senses forsook him—before he received that terrible blow—and he despaired.

He guessed that an attack, real or feigned, had been made upon the other end of the settlement, in order to distract the attention from the scene of this present outrage.

And with this dreadful, despairing thought upon his mind, all became a blank.

He fainted from the pain of his wound.

CHAPTER IV.

MOLE MEETS HIGHWAYMEN AND IS ROBBED—THE BAGS OF GOLD—WHAT FOLLOWED—THE USES OF GUNPOWDER TEA—TIT FOR TAT.

PERHAPS an explanation of the shots which the unfortunate convict heard, would interest the reader.

For this, we must turn to our old friend, Isaac Mole.

Mr. Mole, whose old weakness had completely got the better of him of late, had only just taken the pledge, previous to going on a journey to a neighboring settlement.

The object of his journey was to make a heavy purchase of specie for private speculation.

He had been greatly struck by the tales he had heard of the marvelous finds of speculative diggers; and armed with a well-lined purse, he went off, mounted upon a stout cob, for he was becoming quite a skilful horseman.

He succeeded wonderfully—beyond his hopes.

Returning, he was so filled with satisfaction at his trading, that he was induced, in spite of his pledge-taking not being two days old, to accept a glass of grog from one of the diggers with whom he had traded.

Facilis descensus Averni.

One drop led to another.

The result may be seen easily enough by the intelligent reader.

Poor Mole got—

Hush!

He jogged along upon his cob, his gold jingling in his pockets, as oblivious of anything wrong as you could wish, and singing blithely to himself, when suddenly from behind a clump of trees, two men started out and confronted him.

"Halloo!"

"Halloo!"

The exclamation was mutual.

"Whither so fast, Mr. Mole?" said one of the new-comers.

"Mr. Mole!" quoth the worthy Isaac, "then you know me."

"Of course."

"Dear me!" said Mr. Mole, in a tipsy voice; "wonderful!"

"Who doesn't know the great Mr. Mole?" ejaculated one of the strangers.

"Will you get down and take something to drink with us, Mr. Mole?" said the other man, politely.

Mr. Mole could never resist such an invitation. Down he dropped on to his wooden legs without another word.

The man who had invited him poured out some spirits from a pocket pistol into a horn cup, and handed it to Mr. Mole.

"Your goodsh—I mean good healsh—health," stuttered the old gentleman.

"And yours," said the others, feigning to drink.

When Mr. Mole had drained his cup, according to custom, for he always drank a cup, one of the men, without another word of warning, popped out a pistol, and made this unceremonious request:

"Just let us have a look at your nuggets, if you please, Mr. Mole."

Mr. Mole said nothing.

The perspiration trickled down Mole's back, but he simply took out his bag, and dropped it into the other's hand.

"That's not all you have got," said the man, sharply, placing his pistol close to Mole's head.

"What more?"

"One more. Hand it over."

"Here it is," said Mole, with a sigh; looking rather timid at the pistol the man still held.

After all, he thought he had better get home with a whole skin, and minus his bags of gold, than with his riches, and riddled with bullets.

So reasoned Mole.

And he was right.

"A nice little haul," said the man who had taken the two bags.

"Very," said the other.

"What?" exclaimed Mole, wildly; "what, do you mean to take all from me?"

The two men burst out laughing at this.

"You get home now, Mr. Mole," said one, "as fast as you can, or you may find a bullet in some part of your body."

"Yes, get home, and thank your lucky stars that we don't want the cob as well," said the other.

"Give me my bags," cried poor Mole.

"Bah!" said one of the gentlemen, "get along home."

"You're not going to rob me thus?"

"No—no; we have done it; we are not going to do it."

"Goodness me!" exclaimed Mr. Mole; "what will my wife say?"

"Probably say you are an old coward," said one of these amiable robbers.

"Or perhaps she'll only unscrew one of your wooden legs and whack you with it," suggested the other.

"Oh!" cried Mole.

"Good night."

And they started off.

"Stop—stop!" cried Mole; "don't go."

They pulled up short.

"Have you got any more?"

"No—no; but do come back."

"What on earth are you bothering about?"

"Just have a little pity," implored Mole; "think what I shall have to suffer when I get back."

They laughed at this.

"Why, you discontented old fool," said one of these amiable gentlemen, "just compare yourself with that old man we stripped of his purse, or money-bag, for it was a money-bag—"

"And well filled," suggested his companion.

"Capitally—what would he say to find we had let you off so easily, eh? That's what I want to know."

"Can't say, I'm sure," replied Mole, "only I know that you'll make it precious warm work for my wife with me."

"Ha—ha!"

"Don't laugh," said Mole, imploringly, "don't laugh. Do you really mean to take my money-bags?"

"Of course we do."

"Well, then, in common gratitude, help me out of this trouble."

"How?" demanded one of the robbers, much amused at the suggestion.

"Put a bullet through my coat-tails," said poor Mole.

"Oh, if that's all, willingly," was the reply.

Mole held out the tail of his coat, and the robber blazed away.

Bang! went a bullet through it.

"Now another, if you please," said Mole.

He held out the other side, and the other knight of the road let fly at it.

"Thank you. Now another."

This was granted by the robber.

"Now another, if you please, this side of my coat tail."

A fourth report, and a fourth hole in his coat was the result.

"One more, if you will kindly oblige me."

"I haven't got any more," said one of these amiable robbers, examining his powder-flask.

"But you have," said Mole, to the second robber.

"No, not a shot."

He looked at his ammunition before he replied.

"Are you sure, sir?" asked Mole.

"Sure! Yes," said the man, laughing at Mole.

"And you?"

"No; I said so already."

"Very good," said Mr. Mole. "Then, my very good young men, I have."

And Mole produced a pair of pistols.

He quietly presented one at each of them.

"Now," said he, his wily demeanor vanishing at once, "just give up those bags."

"Never!" cried the two robbers, looking at each other, surprised at Mole's artful trick.

"Then I shall put a bullet—not in your coat, but in your head," said Mole.

"What, would you kill us?" cried the men, looking as though they would run.

"Stop, or I fire!"

Mr. Mole's demeanor had something unpleasant about it now, and when he made a sort of jerky movement forward, down dropped a bag from the hand of one of the robbers.

"Now the other, if you please."

"Come, now, I say——"

"There!"

"Thank you. Now the rest."

"That's all."

"Come, I say," quoth Mr. Mole, in awe-inspiring accents, "don't try on any foolery with me, for I have promised to take home some plunder, and I know what you have got, so down with it."

The two knaves looked at each other for counsel.

They had not a word and scarcely a look for themselves.

"You must be quick, or one of these pistols may go off," cried Mole, holding them in a line with the robbers' heads.

One grumblingly forked out a canvas bag of gold.

"Go on, my dear boys," said Mole.

"I've got no more."

"And you?"

"Not a shurrick," said the other, whatever a shurrick might be.

"Then off with you," said Mole, "or I'll blow you into smithereens."

His look alarmed them.

"Now, if you are not off by the time I count ten, I fire."

Off they ran.

And when they were fairly out of sight, Mole picked up the bags and fastened them about him.

"Ha—ha! that's a stroke of business," said he to himself. "But they wouldn't have parted with their treasure like that if they had only known that my pistols were loaded by Mrs. Mole with gunpowder—tea."

And chuckling thus, he rode on home on his cob.

When he came to count his gains, he found himself not less than three hundred pounds in pocket over the transaction.

"This is a real slice," said he.

And forthwith he set himself to work to invent a plausible yarn by which he should appear even more heroic than he had yet shown himself.

"Oh—oh!" laughed Mole, looking at his coat-tails, "I shall turn this to some account. Ha! my courage is great."

CHAPTER V.

THE PURSUIT OF HILDA—TINKER'S PROGRAMME—HOW HE THREW A LIGHT ON THE JOB.

THE alarm of Hilda's abduction soon spread in the settlement.

Harvey, as you may suppose, was in an awful state of mind.

A party of armed men was organized in the space of a few minutes, and dispatched under different commanders in pursuit.

Their object was to spread out, and cover thus the longest line of country possible, and then, at a certain distance, begin to advance at each extremity of the line so as to form a circle.

In this way the advance was made with great rapidity, when, as Harkaway was about to start, Tinker came bounding up to him.

"Massa Harkaway—Massa Harkaway!" he cried, panting.

"Well?"

"Suffin' to tell yar, Massa Harkaway," he panted.

"Go on then," exclaimed Harkaway, impatiently, "for I have no time to lose."

"Mrs. Harvey——"

"Yes—yes; we all know that—carried off by Morgan's people, no doubt."

"An' Rook."

"What?"

"Rook, sar; that fernal, cantankerous, bad Rook. Nasty fellar, Rook, sar."

Harkaway grew uncomfortable at this.

"Why, what do you know against Rook, Tinker?"

"Rook am Cap'n Morgan's man, sar," replied the boy, with a significant leer. "Cap'n Morgan gib him ounces ob de yallar gold for to do all sort bad work; immense, bery awful bad fellow, sar."

Tinker's extravagant adjectives worried old Jack in his present state of mind.

"Just say what you mean, Tinker, and don't beat about the bush, or I'll flay you alive."

"I see Rook waitin', sar, waitin' for dat Cap'n Morgan, an' dey do a big talk all about Mrs. Harvey."

Harkaway bounded forward at this, and caught Tinker by the throat.

"Don't you attempt to play any tricks with me, don't tell any lies, or you'll wish you'd never been born."

"I see tellin' ob de troof, ebbery word, sar, selp me golly, dere, sar. I know, sar, I watch Rook case I see Cap'n Morgan an' de orders come up, an' so I run away and pretend to be awful feared an' den I come back and I see——"

"What?"

"Lor', Massa Harkaway, how you do jump down poor Tinker's froat—an' den I see Cap'n Morgan talking wid Rook."

"Hah!"

"Yes, sar."

"What about?"

"All 'bout taking Mrs. Harvey away."

"The villain," groaned Harkaway, "after all I have done for him, the scoundrel."

"Yes, sar."

"What did they say?"

"He want Rook to help him, and Rook won't, an' den dey say all sorts naughty words to-geder, and dey fight."

"Fight?"

"Yes, sar."

"Tinker," said Harkaway, looking him very straight in the face, "you're telling me lies."

"No, sar," protested the boy, earnestly; "dey fight awful, until Cap'n Morgan smack him head wid der pistol, and Rook lay down and go to sleep."

"Go to sleep," returned old Jack. "Oh, I see, he fainted."

"Yes, sar; dat's it."

Harkaway felt this a relief to his mind.

It was painful beyond measure to think Rook could have behaved like a traitor.

"Well—well, Tinker," he said, "having got over that, the next thing is to see about getting Mrs. Harvey back as fast as we can."

"Yes, sar," exclaimed Tinker, with a sudden vivacity.

Then he lapsed into sullen silence for awhile, from which he presently awoke, and with a grin he said to Harkaway, in tones indicative of wonderful self-confidence.

"Tinker do dat."

"Do what?"

"Get back Missis Harvey awful double quick."

"You!" exclaimed Harkaway, with a smile.

"Yes, sar."

"How?"

"Massa Harkaway doesn't recollect dat Tinker was wid Cap'n Morgan," he said, slyly.

"Hah!" ejaculated Harkaway, catching at once at this notion, "I do recollect, Tinker; and if you are a good boy and true to us, you shall have a better and a greater reward than anything you can dream of."

Tinker looked earnestly at his master at this.

"Don't want nuffin, Massa Harkaway, for dat; Missis Harvey awful partikler fond of Tinker; Tinker awful partikler fond of Missis Harvey; Massa Harvey quite jealous of Tinker—yah—yah!"

Old Jack could not repress a smile.

"No matter for that. I'll undertake to say that Mr. Harvey will get over his jealousy, if you are the means of restoring his wife to him."

"Yes, sar."

"Now, tell me quickly, for the time is getting on, and I am growing impatient to be doing something more than gossip here; tell me how you propose to go to work."

Tinker began his reply by scratching his wool.

"Tinker'll go back fust, and den he'll see, and have a talkee-talkee, and watch and whistle you all when to come up! Bring all de niggers and all de gallophus make-fires; and hab a cantankerous immense big blaze away at Cap'n Morgan."

"Very good, Tinker," said Harkaway; "I think I can trust you now."

"Yes, sar."

"Then let this be the signal between us; but

first let me recommend the greatest caution, my good Tinker."

Tinker winked.

"Yes, sar, Tinker am sield a artful cuss—yah—yah!"

CHAPTER VI.

HILDA AND THE BUSHRANGERS—FAMILIAR FACES—AN ALARM—TINKER, THE SPY—MORE NEWS.

HILDA struggled vainly in the arms of her captor.

The strength of the notorious bushranger was something prodigious.

In spite of all her wildest efforts, she was borne away.

After a certain time her strength began to fail her.

Her fright was piteous to behold.

A deathly faintness stole over her, and her senses were fast deserting her.

The sickly pallor of her cheek evidently alarmed the daring Morgan.

"Come—come, sweet one," said he; "let this revive you."

And he pressed his lips to her cheek.

Hilda was aroused at this indignity, and she fought her captor furiously.

Seizing him by the hair, she tore so viciously at him, that in sheer self-defense he let her fall.

As soon as she was upon her feet, she fled.

But her success was short-lived, for in the space of a minute or two, the bushranger was upon her again.

"If you get so rumbustical, my love," said he, pressing her to him in spite of herself, "we must find some means of holding you down; don't scratch, or I shall have to clip your claws."

* * * * *

They reached their destination after a weary journey, for Hilda would not walk.

Such a burthen to carry is all very well for awhile, but even the most muscular man must necessarily tire under the load that he had to bear.

Upon their arrival at the bushranger's camp, they were met by two men, amongst other's, whose appearance struck additional terror to her soul.

One was Hunston, who had ever been associated with the troubles of herself and her friends.

Toro, the Italian brigand and bully, was the other.

"Halloo!" cried Hunston; "why, you have bagged a prize, Captain Morgan."

"Don't you see who the prize is?" exclaimed Toro.

"A lady."

"Ay; but who?"

Hunston stared again.

"Is it possible? Can I believe the evidence of my own eyes? Mrs. Harvey?"

Hilda aroused at this, and drawing herself up before Hunston, she exclaimed, in a voice of passionate energy:

"If you have a spark of manhood left, Mr. Hunston, you will protect me from these ruffians."

"Gently—gently, fair one," said Captain Morgan, "no names."

"No one means any harm, Mrs. Harvey," said Hunston, "and as you are Captain Morgan's guest——"

"Prisoner."

"If he likes to place you under my care, I am sure we shall get on well together."

There was nothing much in the words, but the look that accompanied them made her shiver.

He drew near with an ominous gesture, when Morgan stepped before him.

"Stand back!"

"Why, really, Captain Morgan, I am an old acquaintance."

"Enough," said Morgan, sharply; "there is nothing like an understanding. Remember that I allow no familiarities with my guests. This lady must be treated with as much respect as myself. Let the least complaint come from her about you, or about any one of you, woe betide him. He will have to render me strict account. Do you hear?"

"You are too——"

"Silence!" shouted the bushranger.

Hunston was about to make some hasty rejoinder, when the expression of the bushranger captain caused him to be prudent.

Morgan was an unpleasant enemy to make, and Hunston felt an instinctive dread of him.

Disagreeable forebodings were ever in his mind in the presence of the redoubtable bushranger.

Were these forebodings really justified?

Time will show.

Meanwhile, Hunston with difficulty swallowed his wrath, and walked away moodily.

"Come what may," he muttered to himself, "I shall make a point of squaring accounts with our bully friend Morgan. Hang his impudence!"

* * * * *

"Place the guard for the night," said Morgan.

One of his most reliable men proceeded to this task, when suddenly a black object tumbled into the open out from a cluster of thickly-grown shrubs and bushes.

"Halloo!"

"Shoot him down!"

"The blacks are upon us," cried Captain Morgan. "Up with every mother's son of you. Look to your rifles."

"Yah—yah!" said a familiar voice, "don't be so catwampusously immense big frightened, Captain Morgan. Taint de debil, only poor nigger cove, boy Tinker."

"Tinker?"

"Yah—yah."

"What brings you here?"

"Got away from Massa Harkaway, sar," replied Tinker, "and I've come to gib you warning."

"Of what?"

"Dey's coming."

"What, here?"

"Dey no find out yet, but dey got a big lot of men from eberywhere; all got horses and make-fires. We get off, sar, sharp, sar, or de debils come up and make sassingers ob dis fair infant. Yah—yah!"

Hilda heard.

She recognized Tinker at once, and at first she had gained new hope.

But now, on hearing, as she thought, that he was in league with the bushrangers, despair seized her.

"Deceitful wretch!" she cried, passionately, at the black boy. "After all the kindness we have shown you."

"Yah—yah!" grinned Tinker; "you no lub me."

Hilda was violent, and in her indignation she quite forgot the terrors of her present situation.

"If I ever get back you shall have a sound whipping for this, you little fiend!" she exclaimed.

"Yah—yah!"

And "yah—yah" being all she could get out of him, she said no more, but bit her lips in sheer mortification.

Meanwhile, the bushrangers redoubled their vigilance around their camp.

Not a precaution was neglected.

Sentries were posted in all directions.

And now it was that Captain Morgan showed now admirably fitted he was for the post of commander.

He was everywhere at once, and displayed the greatest energy and activity without making any particular fuss about it.

"Stay you there, Tinker," he said, turning around, before quitting the sight of his prisoner.

"Yes, Captain Morgan. Tinker keep dam partik'lar watch over lubly gal, sar; yah—yah!"

"That's right."

And the captain of the bushrangers, perfectly at ease in his mind upon that score, turned around and resumed his duties.

Now when Morgan was fairly out of sight, Tinker's demeanor changed with strange suddenness.

He dropped his aggravating laugh, and turned serious at once.

He shot a glance of meaning at Mrs. Harvey, and then he marched off to the clump of trees which sheltered the open spot at no great distance.

He dodged in and out of these forest monarchs to ascertain that there were no interlopers on the watch, and then back he ran.

But just as he was returning, a tall, dark figure made a sudden appearance upon the scene, and stepped up to Hilda.

"My fair Hilda," said Toro, for it was the Italian, "you're looking now lovelier than ever."

Hilda curled her lip haughtily, but was silent.

"Come, Mrs. Harvey, beauteous signora, one chaste salute—nay, don't refuse me. I have loved you from the first."

He would have seized her in his arms, but Hilda was not to be thus rudely approached with impunity.

She dragged herself away, and called loudly for help.

In an instant Tinker came bounding up to the spot.

"Be off, you imp of Satan!" thundered Toro; "be off, or I'll slay you."

"No—no," said Tinker, grinning, "you no kill Tinker, but Tinker kill you gollopshus immense big quick if you ain't gone."

Toro, with a fierce oath, strode after the black boy.

Now Tinker showed extreme artfulness, for he appeared to dodge him, and yet he allowed himself to be caught.

"Now you shall have it!" muttered Toro, between his teeth.

Holding the black boy with one hand, he made a slap at him with the other.

Down bobbed Tinker.

"Yah—yah!"

"Curse your yah—yah!" cried the Italian, furiously seizing him again. "Take that!"

Tinker was out of his arms in a jiffy.

A precious awkward thing to hold was Tinker, for beyond one very small garment, he had no clothes whatever.

His skin was smooth and shining, and altogether he was as difficult to hold as an eel.

Toro was about to fly after the boy again, when suddenly he felt a sharp, stinging sensation on his right leg, just above the knee, and looking down, found that it was bleeding.

"Why, what on earth—"

He paused in utter amazement.

"Want any more like dat, bully man?" asked Tinker.

"Why, you have stabbed me!"

"Yes, bully man," grinned the boy, "only a lily bit; gib you immense cantankerous more next time. Don't be greedy, yah—yah!"

And then he took from his loin cloth a stumpy knife, with which he had contrived to wound the Italian.

But the latter had not felt the wound in the excitement of catching the eel-like black boy.

"I'll kill you for this," said Toro, fiercely.

"Oh, no," returned Tinker, with irritating cheerfulness, "you no catchee Tinker. Massa Morgan beat you, and you awful big 'fraid ob Massa Morgan; yah—yah!"

Toro bandaged his leg around with his neck-cloth, and then made after the boy.

But he might as well have tried to catch a rainbow or an electric shock.

Tinker was, as vulgar folks say, all over the shop at once.

He was a master in the art of aggravating, too, and he had an endless lot of tricks calculated to goad a man like Toro to desperation.

He would wait until the Italian got close up to him, and then, after some insulting gesture, he would pelt him with a handful of mud or stones, and bound away like a rocket.

In the course of this singular chase, Tinker ran around toward the spot where Hilda stood, and here he pulled up short, holding his hands behind him while he waited for Toro to approach.

The Italian came on.

But he did not observe that Tinker had handed Mrs. Harvey a piece of paper.

She opened it eagerly, and found, hurriedly written on it, these words:

"Keep up your courage; we are near, and shall soon set you free. The bearer of this is a friend in whom you may implicitly rely."

"JACK H."

The words danced before her eyes.

For a moment she quite forgot her presence of mind, and she spoke her thoughts aloud.

"How I wronged that brave boy! Poor Tinker! They are here, perhaps—perhaps even now about to rush in and drive these wretches and ruffians away."

Toro advanced, and Tinker dodged away as usual.

But Toro caught sight of the open paper in Hilda's hand, and in an instant his suspicions were aroused.

Without one word or sign of warning, he made a stride forward and snatched the paper from her hand.

"What is this? Hah! treason!" he cried. "By the fiends, the boy shall die!"

The words were barely uttered, when Tinker sprang upon him with the agility of a monkey, and snatched the paper away.

His stumpy knife played its part again, for Toro received a hideous gash in the cheek that laid bare the bone.

Toro gave a yell of mingled agony and rage.

"You Satan's egg!" he yelled, holding his cheek, while the blood poured through his finger's, "you shall die by slow torture for this!"

"Big bully man; yah—yah!" was Tinker's only reply.

And he threw in another sight, placing his fin-

gers to his nose, and wound up by pelting the wounded Toro with pebbles.

Just at this moment Captain Morgan came up with two of his followers.

"Halloo!" he cried; "why, what is all this outcry? I thought the Philistines were down upon us."

"Seize that boy!" cried the Italian, fiercely.

They laid hands upon Tinker, who stood very placidly in custody.

"I found him conniving with the prisoner; he gave her a letter."

"Oh!" exclaimed the virtuous Tinker, "what a naughty, great big lie!"

"A letter!" exclaimed Captain Morgan.

"Yes."

"Where is it?"

"He has it now."

They searched the black boy.

He had not many corners to conceal anything, you see; and they found nothing at all upon him.

"There are no signs of a letter," said Morgan, sternly.

"Then he has swallowed it," persisted Toro.

This was right.

Tinker had.

At the first sign of danger, he scrambled it into his mouth, and bolted it as easily as if it had been a Cockle's antibilious.

The ingenious black boy, however, threw up his hands, showed the whites of his eyes, and appeared otherwise greatly scandalized.

"Oh, my, what a great whacker, Cap'en Morgan, sar," he said, in virtuous indignation. "Dis naughty, ugly feller wanted to kiss your gal—de imperant beast—an' I ses: 'Cap'en Morgan left Tinker on guard, so you don't,' and ses he: 'Yes, I do,' and he went for me; but I gib him one in de leg and anoder in de cheek, and he no like my nicey-niceys, and he couldn't catch me, and den, in a beast of a great, big, immense temper, he ses: 'I'll tole Cap'en Morgan dat you brought a letter, an' den Cap'en Morgan'll gib you suffin for yerself.'"

This sounded like the truth.

Morgan glanced from the boy to Toro, and then to Mrs. Harvey.

Approaching the latter, he raised his hat politely.

"I hope, madame, that you have been put to no annoyance by my people," he said.

"But for that boy I should have been subjected to the grossest insults from that ruffian—your worthy comrade."

Morgan changed color.

"Has he dared—"

"The boy spoke the truth when he told you that he had defended me."

Morgan nodded his head in a determined manner.

"Good; we can't allow this sort of thing to continue. An example must be made. Seize Toro!"

Several of the bushrangers obeyed this order.

"Tie him up."

"Not before me," cried Mrs. Harvey, eagerly, "not before me!"

"Your wishes are law to me," returned the bushranger chieftain; "remove him."

The Italian was hustled away from the spot.

"Now, Tinker."

"Yes, sar."

"Get some nice, pliable switches, willows, if you can."

"Yes, sar," said Tinker, in eager anticipation.

"And flog away until you are tired out."

"Tinker no get tired eber; him work hard, yah—yah; whack—whack! on de big Toro's back."

And grinning all over his face, the black boy turned off to the flogging.

CHAPTER VII.

IN WHICH A DISGRACEFUL CONSPIRACY IS HATCHED AGAINST ISAAC MOLE.

THE greatest excitement prevailed in Harkawayville, as they had christened their new settlement.

Anxious moments these were indeed for all who were left behind.

Amongst these were of course the ladies, with the unfortunate exception of the one whose loss caused the present trouble.

The two boys, young Jack and his comrade Harry Girdwood, were left on guard.

Mr. Mole, too.

The unfortunate ex-convict Rook was found to be in a most precarious condition, and he was tended with the greatest care by the ladies.

"Do you know, my dear Jack," said Mr. Mole, "I can scarcely restrain my impatience when I think—"

"Of what, sir?"

"Of your dear, brave father and poor Dick being in peril there, while we are on guard here. I long for—"

"For what?"

"Glory, Jack, glory; to share the dangers. I was never born for a quiet life; my love was danger always."

"Ahem!"

"You appear doubtful."

"Not I, sir."

"Well, I must tell you that I have grown rusty since my last little skirmish on my way from the gold fields yonder. Gold; what a magic ring. What music; what fascination in the sound, but still the word danger I love better."

"Yes," said Jack, smiling inwardly at the old gentleman's enthusiasm.

"This is a wonderful country. I shouldn't wonder if there was gold upon the very earth we tread."

"Mr. Mole—Mr. Mole!" cried a clear, ringing voice, with a pleasing foreign accent, "you are growing greedy, I fear."

"Not I, Paquita, my dear," said the old gentleman, "only it's really a tempting subject to excite even the most stoical of her kind."

"Harry," said Paquita.

"Yes."

"We want you and Jack."

The two boys followed Paquita into the house. They found little Emily awaiting them.

The poor child was in the greatest distress, and, indeed, had never got over the shock which the outrage on her mother had occasioned her.

She was constantly in tears, and knew not a moment's rest in mind or in body.

Young Jack, her gallant champion, was the only person who could cheer her at all.

Paquita knew this well.

"Here, Jack," said little Emily, forcing an appearance of cheerfulness which she was far from feeling, "here are the English papers. Now come, all of us, and have a good read."

"Let Harry read out to us," said young Jack; "he's the best reader."

This was settled, and Harry Girdwood selected some interesting pieces until he came upon one which excited general attention, and led to some very singular results.

"Salting a mine."

"Whatever can that mean, Harry?" said little Emily.

"Wait a bit; this would interest old Mole finely."

He read it down, and found that it was a law case exciting great attention in London, which treated a gigantic swindle in getting up a company for the purchase of a diamond mine.

Diamonds had been purchased at a great cost, and the ground which they proposed purchasing was "salted"—i. e., sprinkled with real diamonds just before it was visited by the committee of inspection.

"This is glorious!" exclaimed young Jack, laughing all over his face. "How I should like to salt a mine for old Mole."

"Not easily done—we want the materials," said Harry.

"The diamonds?"

"Yes."

"But I mean a gold mine."

"I see—but how?"

"Why, we could get a little real gold if necessary, but I don't see that it is; that's near enough," he added, pointing to an old-fashioned brass candlestick.

"That?"

"Yes."

"Now—now, it's all very well, but old Mole is not to be gulled without a little trouble."

"Perhaps not, but you have heard of candlestick gold."

"Yes."

"Well, then, I know that this old fellow melted down would make lovely gold, and you shall see it, too."

Poor Mole!

Fun and danger loomed in the distance once more.

And yet, at this very moment, he was calmly sleeping hard by, dozing after a whiskey toddy of such a strength as would make you or I wink again.

But the details of the infamous conspiracy

against the worthy Isaac's peace of mind must be related in another chapter.

CHAPTER VIII.

HOW IT WAS PREPARED FOR MR. MOLE—WHAT WICKEDNESS!—THE GREED OF GOLD—THE TRANSFER—MOLE A MINE OWNER—WHAT NUGGETS!—WHAT GOLD!—WHAT WEALTH!

"FIRST take our candlestick," said young Jack, "and melt it carefully down into little bits, then pick out the mine; then remove a few inches of the earth from the surface and mix the nuggets sparsely, mind, so as not to excite any suspicions."

"Then," added Harry Girdwood, solemnly, "we let Mr. Mole have an accidental view, and see what can be done."

"Agreed."

They shook hands over this iniquitous compact, the young miscreants, and completed their proceedings.

Some few days after this, strange rumors got to be buzzed about the settlement.

The two darkeys, Sunday and Monday, it was whispered, had alighted upon gold.

You can imagine the effect of these reports.

The two dusky diggers roped-in their ground, and allowed none of the curious to approach too closely.

Mr. Mole heard these rumors in due course, as Harry and young Jack took care he should, and down he hobbled to see for himself.

Now began the extreme artfulness.

The conspirators had well matured their plans. They hung back, pretending to take no particular notice of the matter, and awaited Mr. Mole.

He came.

They knew that he was sure to tackle them, and he did.

"Do you really think, dear boys, that these two niggers have hit upon a mine?" he said.

"Of course they have," said young Jack; "not much doubt about that, eh, Harry?"

"But of course, Mr. Mole, it belongs to them," said Harry.

"And what—what can be the value of their find?" asked Mr. Mole, eagerly.

"Can't say."

"But you have seen a good deal more of it than I have," said Mr. Mole, eagerly; "what should you say?"

"A few thousands at the outside," suggested Harry Girdwood, "only a few."

"Yes," said young Jack, "these mines are so deceptive, you never know what's what."

"Precisely."

"Sometimes a good thing turns out a regular duffer."

"A what?"

"Duffer."

"I object to such an expression," said Mr. Mole, who was upon his dignity, "even when a gold mine is in question. Slang, my dear boys, is objectionable in man, woman or child."

"Quite so," said Harry.

"But what is your real opinion about—"

"The mine?"

"Yes."

"It is a fine thing," said young Jack, "but I don't want Sunday or Monday to get too great an idea of it, or they might run up the price of their treasure."

"I see," said Mr. Mole, winking and looking most artful, "they want to sell!"

"Not want to," replied young Jack; "but they would, perhaps, and I should like dad to buy as cheaply as possible."

Mr. Mole walked apart.

These words made a deep impression on his mind, and he came speedily to the inevitable conclusion that he would like to be the purchaser.

The conspirators had, of course, calculated upon this.

So he sought Sunday on the quiet, and sounded him.

"I can't say as I want to sell it, Brudder Mole," said Sunday, "an' if I did, I don't s'pose that I could find anyone to give my price."

Mr. Mole fidgeted.

"What do you call your price?" he asked, vainly trying to conceal his eagerness.

"Oh, a whole lot of money," said Sunday.

"What do you mean by that? Ten pounds?"

"More likely fifty," returned Sunday.

Mole chuckled.

If the find was worth anything at all, fifty pounds was a ridiculously small price to put upon it.

What could be better?

"Perhaps I might buy it," said he, in an off-hand way, "if we could come to terms; I should like to see it very much."

"Well," said Sunday, "as you are my own brudder, in a manner of speaking, I don't know if I ought to refuse. But Monday don't let no one look at it; wait until there ain't no one about, and then you can come in."

"All right."

And Mr. Mole walked off to chuckle and rub his hands in silent satisfaction.

They were alone.

Mr. Mole stood within the magic circle, the roped-in-space to which the two darkeys, Sunday and Monday, asserted their claim.

"So this is the spot," said Mole. "Who would ever imagine that we were walking over the precious metal here? How ever did you find it out?"

"I was digging some sand out when I first got hold of a bit of yellow metal," replied Sunday, "a lump."

"A lump?" echoed Mr. Mole, in awe-stricken accents. "Large?"

"Very."

"Goodness me! I should so much like to see some of it," said Mr. Mole.

"Easy enough," returned Sunday, promptly.

So saying he placed a shovel in the old gentleman's hands.

"Have a dig."

Mr. Mole said never a word, but drove the spade into the soft, yielding earth.

One shovelful was turned over, and as he let the sand and earth drop from it, half-a-dozen heavy nuggets fell to the ground.

Mole's eyes dilated as he plumped on and scrambled them up in his hands.

"Gold—gold—gold!" he muttered, vainly endeavoring to subdue his excitement; "what a feast, ye gods!"

"You ain't found much, brudder Mole!" said Sunday, who was complacently smoking his pipe.

"No—no—no!" returned Mole, "not much."

"Not so much as I turned up every go, brudder Mole."

Mole gave a subdued but ecstatic groan.

"How much do you want for me to take it off your hands?"

"Fifty pounds."

"Where's Monday?"

"Here I am, Mr. Mole," said the Prince of Limbi, stepping up, for he had been hanging about awaiting his cue.

"Sunday wants to buy out your right to this piece of land for fifty pounds."

"Does he?" said Monday; "well, considerin that it's mine as well as his, he might ask me before he does nothing."

"Just so."

"I hope they're not going to quarrel over it," thought Mole, anxiously; "there never was a more foolish invention than partnership."

"I know you would like for brudder Mole to have it, Monday," the darkey said, in a semi-apologetic tone to his partner in the diggings.

"Oh, of course. Mole is our friend."

"If that's agreed," said Mr. Mole, much relieved and eager to clinch the bargain, "here's the money."

"Good, friend Mole. You will make your fortune. You find lots of gold, if you dig long enough for it."

"Let's have it all in fair and business-like order. Give me a receipt, and state on it what it is all for," said Mole.

"Bery good, brudder Mole," said Sunday, leering at his black partner; "you draw up de paper dockyment, and we'll write our names to it."

"Agreed."

"That's capital," said Mr. Mole. "I'm delighted to find you such business-like people; and now, all we have to do," he added, producing a written paper from his pocket, "is to sign this."

Sunday took the paper, and scanned its contents.

Then he handed it to Monday.

"Why, Mr. Mole," said the latter, "you have got it already written out."

Mr. Mole appeared slightly confused at this.

"Yes, I have," he said, coughing a little; "I had some faint idea that you would perhaps be inclined to treat with me."

"Oh."

"Yes."

"How very odd."

A short silence ensued; and then Mr. Mole produced a pen and an inkhorn.

It looked as if everything had been cut and dried in the old gentleman's mind.

"Well," he said, nervously, "we had better sign."

"Perhaps you'd like to try the ground a bit more before you settle it," suggested Monday.

"They're hanging fire," said Mr. Mole to himself.

"No—no," he added aloud, in an off-hand manner as he could assume, "we are all friends together, and there's no deception."

"Oh, no," exclaimed Sunday, showing the white of his eyes in his virtuous reproof even of the remark; "could I deceive my own brudder?"

"Oh, bother the brother," said Mr. Mole, impatiently, for he never relished the claim of kinship which Sunday was constantly asserting.

Sunday grinned.

"Sign away, all of us, den," he said.

And he opened the final negotiation by scrawling his own signature across the document.

Monday grinned.

"That's it," said Mr. Mole, folding up the paper, and pocketing it; "now, it's mine. I will to work, and find gold—gold—gold!"

Sunday and Monday grinned as they walked away.

There was a ring in their laugh that the worthy old gentleman hardly liked.

No matter.

He held the treasure.

"What did the quaint niggers mean by that hoarse laugh," he asked himself, again and again; "no matter, those laugh best who laugh last."

Still he had just the faintest misgivings.

"Surely, they can't have played me any trick," he said to himself, again and again. "Oh, no—"

He stooped and picked up a piece of the shining yellow metal.

"This is solid fact," he said, as he fondled it in his hand, "solid—solid fact, and there's no mistake about it."

He looked about him anxiously as he spoke.

Already his newly-acquired wealth was bringing its penalties.

Such is the price of riches.

"I sha'n't be able to leave it night or day," he said to himself. "As soon as it gets known how rich the prize is, it will excite the cupidity of everyone in the settlement."

So he prepared to camp there for the night; but before night came he dug, and sifted, and sifted and dug until he had got several ounces of the precious metal, and gathering them all together, he held his treasure in his open palms, groaning in ecstasy over it.

"Made for life," he kept muttering to himself, "for life—for life! Mole—Mole, you're a lucky dog."

And so mumbling he dropped into a feverish sleep, but trouble was already looming up in the distance.

Trouble which the old gentleman had never contemplated.

Trouble in the shape of his old tormentors.

But before we can let the reader enjoy further Mr. Mole's perplexities, we must return to Hilda.

CHAPTER IX.

AN ALARM—THE BUSHRANGER'S RESOLVE—THE MARCH TO BATTLE—BRAVE LITTLE TINKER LEFT ON GUARD—"AIN'T I WICKED, JEST?"—A FIGHT.

THE punishment of the Italian ruffian was interrupted by a sudden alarm.

Bigamini, who had fallen naturally into his old character of spy, came flying up to Captain Morgan with the most startling intelligence.

"There's a whole army upon the march, Captain Morgan," he said, in considerable excitement.

"An army of what?" demanded the bushranger, with coolness.

"Niggers," replied the spy; "all the settlement, I should say."

"In one party?"

"No; several."

"Which way?"

"Harkaway is leading one of the parties."

"And the others?"

"Harvey, and that big Jefferson, the American, the other," was the reply.

Morgan frowned.

"That means business, apparently," he said.

"It's a ugly business, too, captain," said the bushranger, "Stephane Robert."

Morgan started.

"All well, I dare say we shall be ready for them," said the bushranger, "Captain Morgan yet."

"All right, Morgan," said Bigamini, "if

you would only take a numble cove's advice, you'd let that lovely gal go."

"What?" thundered the bushranger chief, turning upon the spy as if he would annihilate him, "do you dare to offer your counsel?"

"I only—"

"Silence!"

"Beg pardon."

"Silence!"

"Yes, sir."

"Go."

"Yes, sir."

And precious glad of the permission, the spy scrambled out of the fierce chief's presence.

Morgan walked up and down in thought for some little time.

"They must not get as far as this, at any rate," he muttered to himself; "no—no; I must meet them half-way and fight them. They shall have a taste of bush-fighting, and see how they like it."

"Yes—yes, Harkaway, in Captain Morgan you will find no Greek or Italian coward to fight with, but an Englishman bold as yourself."

Then, turning sharply around, Morgan called the black boy.

"Yes, Cap'en Morgan," answered Tinker, bounding forward.

"There's going to be a fight, Tinker," said Morgan.

"Larks!" cried the black boy, capering about; "gollopshus larks. Tinker go and put on his war paint."

"No—no; you'll have to stay on guard here."

"Where?" demanded the boy, apparently crestfallen and disappointed.

"Here, to mind Mrs. Harvey. You shall have some of the fighting a little later on."

"Berry good, sar," returned Tinker, "I mind de gal, sar; nobody take away your gal from Tinker, sar."

"Treat her with every respect."

"Yes, sar."

"And I'll reward you handsomely, for you are a fine boy."

"Tinker a lubly boy, sar," returned the young nigger, proudly; "splendiferous, magnificent critter; look at him noble self, sir."

"Well, I don't know so much about your looks," returned the bushranger chief, "but you are faithful to those you like and those you serve."

Tinker's eyes twinkled strangely as he replied:

"Yes, sar, Tinker bery faithful, sar. So you find, sar. Awful splendid faithful critter, sar, to those he lubs."

"Well, now I'm off, that's enough for you. Look well after the lady."

"Yes, sar."

"And look to me for your reward," said Morgan.

"Yes, sar. Tinker do him duty, sar."

And with a final word of admonition, the leader of the lawless bushrangers started off to collect his men, and march on to meet the advancing army from Harkaway settlement.

"Oh, yes," said Tinker, "I'll mind de gal; Missie Harvey bery safe wid dis chile—yah, yah! Poor Cap'en Morgan—yah—yah—yah! Golly! ain't I thunderin' cantank'rous wicked jest—yah—yah!"

And Tinker grinned, looking intensely satisfied at his own wickedness.

What shape his wickedness took will soon be explained to the reader.

Morgan was already on the march, and, indeed, had progressed some considerable distance, when a loud warning call behind them attracted attention.

"Halloo!" exclaimed the bushranger, "look around."

"There's someone coming," said one of the men.

A man bounding along at a tremendous pace, now appeared in sight.

"Stop—stop!" he shouted out as he ran.

"Why, it's that idiot, Bigamini," said Captain Morgan.

He was right.

Bigamini bounded up to the party of bushrangers, out of breath, and apparently in a state of intense excitement and alarm.

"What on earth ails you?" demanded Captain Morgan, as Bigamini came up.

"Such a blessed patter I've had of it," he gasped; "such a game of 'are an' 'ounds, blowed if I've got no wind left to speak of."

"What's the matter now?" demanded the bushranger chief. "Speak quickly."

"Step's gone."

"Gone?"

"Bolted!"

"Who's gone?"

"The gal—Mrs. Harvey."

"But where's the boy, Tinker?" cried Morgan, clutching hold of Bigamini.

"Bolted likewise," said the spy; "absquatulated, vamosed, sloped."

Morgan fairly staggered at this news.

"I'll not believe it!" he exclaimed; "you're deceiving me. Beware how you trifle with me."

He seized Bigamini fiercely by the throat.

"I say now, capt'in, drop it," remonstrated the luckless spy. "You can't get her back by stoppin' the hair in my wisen."

Morgan threw him heavily away, and he fell.

"Why didn't you intercept them?" he said.

"Cos why?" answered Bigamini. "I was a-listening behind the trees, and I heered the black kid talk about which way they was going as soon as you were fairly out of the way. Then says I to myself, if I stops 'em now, they'll diddle me afterwards; the best course is to consult the capt'in before he gets too far off—"

"And while you are here?"

"They've bolted."

"Fool!"

"Not quite a fool neither, Capt'in Morgan, 'cos I know exact the way as they took, 'cos why? I heerd 'em map out all their journey as nice as ninepence."

"And you think you could overtake them?"

"Yes."

"Are you armed?"

"I've got my barkers," replied Bigamini, producing the pistols.

"Off with you, then," said the bushranger; "overtake them, or never show up here again."

"Yes, capt'in."

"Shoot the boy."

"I will, with pleasure, capt'in."

"And bring back the lady. Respect her, or you will have to answer to me."

"Never fear, capt'in."

"Mind, bring her back, or don't show your face to me again."

"I'll bring her back, and give Tinker a shot through his impish head," said Bigamini, earnestly.

And off he ran.

"The capt'in ain't to say ch'ice in his lingo," said the spy. "In fact, he's so very insulting at times as he gets my monkey reg'lar up. Talking of monkeys, I wonder whether that young monkey Tinker will show fight?"

It is rather odd that his soliloquy should so run upon the word monkey.

And why?

Read on, and you will see.

* * * * *

Yes.

It was true.

Tinker had run away with the prisoner he had been left to guard.

It was also true, unfortunately, that while they were concerting their plans, and mapping out the route back to the settlement, Bigamini, the spy, was lurking in ambush and listening to what was being said.

Now Tinker knew every inch of the ground, so to speak.

Trees, stones, and other signs, which to a stranger would have passed unnoticed, served him as landmarks in his progress.

Part of the country which they had to traverse was flat and unmarked by any special features.

But after an hour's hard walk, or, perhaps, we should more properly say run, for they kept upon the trot for the most part of the journey, the ground grew more uneven, and assumed an appearance of hill and vale, that promised well for Hilda's desires.

And frequently they came in sight of trees.

This was regarded as a piece of good fortune by both of them.

They could rest here for awhile in safety.

And rest they did, for they were both fatigued with their exertions.

"I can scarcely put one foot before the other now, my good Tinker," said Mrs. Harvey.

"Awful great bit sorry for dat, Missie Harvey," said the black boy, "'cos Tinker ain't big enough to carry you home."

Hilda smiled.

"No, Tinker, I should be too big a baby for you, I fear."

"You not a baby at all, Missie Harvey," said Tinker, proudly; "you bery bold lady, bery lubly lady, bery bravelady."

She smiled again.

"Not altogether a coward, yet not brave."

She concluded with a faint scream.

"What's that?"

"Which?"

"Look!"

She pointed to the branch of one of the nearest trees, where a fantastic-looking object squatted upon a branch, looking down upon them.

A huge monkey.

There he sat chewing something that he had found, and looking as wise as an owl.

Tinker made a step or two forward to inspect the strange object closer.

"Don't leave me, Tinker," exclaimed Mrs. Harvey; "stay close by me."

"At right, Missie Harvey; don't you know dat monkey is a golly good fellow?"

"Know him; no."

"Why, it is Nero."

"Never."

"You'll see. Nero—Nero—Nero!"

Nero—for it was our old friend—grinned, and slid down from his perch.

"Good Nero," said Hilda; "I am so glad it is a friend; shake hands."

Nero put out his paw.

Apparently, he was not less pleased than they were at the meeting.

He wagged his head in his well-known old-fashioned way, and grinned at them both, dividing his attentions and his favors fairly between them.

"How are all at home?" said Mrs. Harvey, smilingly.

Nero caught a flea by way of answering this.

"Oh, Nero—Nero, why can't you talk? You could make me feel so happy, or perhaps not. Perhaps you would have had news to tell me. Well—well, you have none at all; no news is good news; we have always heard. Nero!"

The last mention of the monkey's name was caused by his sudden rushing off.

Back he flew to his tree, and began tearing furiously at one of the smaller branches.

"Nero!"

"Come back, sir."

Nero took no heed of Mrs. Harvey nor of Tinker.

Evidently there was something wrong with him.

What could it be?

They had not long to wait to find out, for while their attention was thus absorbed by the wild antics of the monkey, a voice exclaimed:

"Get you at last, have I?"

Hilda turned with a half-stifled scream.

There, not ten feet from where she stood, was a man, presenting a pair of pistols at them.

One at herself.

The other at Tinker.

"Oh!"

"Now, mama," said this man, "back you go, or I'll shoot you, damme!"

"Oh, my heart," cried Tinker.

But he kept at a respectful distance from the threatening pistol.

The reader has, of course, divined who this was.

Bigamini.

Who could it be but the villainous spy?

When he boasted that—to quote his own peculiar idiom—he ran like a blooming deer, his brag was not at all exaggerated.

He had previously seen them at their camp, when we first met them, and he had started they had left of late.

"Come along, my beauty girl," said he to Hilda; "off with you."

"Never," returned Hilda, proudly; "I'll die first."

"Now, don't you aggarawate a poor devil," said Bigamini, "or blessed if you mayn't die, and no error about it."

"Begone, and let us proceed on our way," said Hilda, loftily. "If you attempt to molest me further you will suffer; I have a husband."

"I know Dick Harvey very well," returned Bigamini, "we're old pals, in fact."

"Then you know that Richard Harvey is not a man to be trifled with; you are safe only at a distance."

"Oh, I'll keep a long way off him, with you; so on you come."

"Begone!"

"Begone!"

"I go."

"You go, but I won't let our tank boys—lastly, I'll be back, and I'll be back, and I'll be back."

"You go, but I won't let our tank boys—lastly, I'll be back, and I'll be back, and I'll be back."

"You go, but I won't let our tank boys—lastly, I'll be back, and I'll be back, and I'll be back."

"You go, but I won't let our tank boys—lastly, I'll be back, and I'll be back, and I'll be back."

"You go, but I won't let our tank boys—lastly, I'll be back, and I'll be back, and I'll be back."

"You go, but I won't let our tank boys—lastly, I'll be back, and I'll be back, and I'll be back."

"You go, but I won't let our tank boys—lastly, I'll be back, and I'll be back, and I'll be back."

And they both rolled upon the ground together.

In fact, they were in half a jiffy so thoroughly mixed up, that the difficulty was to distinguish which was which.

Tinker's oily skin offered no hold to his adversary.

After a momentary scramble, up Tinker got, and snatched up the pistol that was yet undischarged, from the ground.

Bigamini saw how matters were, and ducking to avoid the fire, in case Tinker should be about to shoot, he leaped upon him.

Hilda now fled to Tinker's assistance.

But her aid was not needed, for help came from a most unexpected quarter.

Something whizzed through the air, and came down with a mighty thwack upon poor Bigamini's scone.

Down he dropped.

"Oh—oh!" he yelled, "I'm done for. Murder—oh!"

His unexpected assailant was the monkey Nero.

Tinker stepped back, pistol in hand, and left Bigamini and Nero to have it out together.

Nero's gentle nature vanished altogether, and dropping the branch of the tree which he had torn off for a cudgel, he fell on the spy.

They closed.

"Now, no sooner did Bigamini see that big, hairy face close to his, and the fierce eyes gleaming into his own, than fear filled his craven soul, for he had quite forgotten the existence of the great monkey.

"Oh, the devil! I'm in the clutch of the Evil One at last," he groaned.

Still he fought.

Yet not with the vigor and fierce determination he would otherwise have shown.

Nero tore at him with the greatest ferocity, and buried his claws in the wretched man's flesh.

So desperate was the battle, that Bigamini was speedily blinded with his own blood.

And all the time Hilda and Tinker stood looking on.

Hilda horrified, fear-stricken at the spectacle. Tinker laughing.

Yes, the black boy enjoyed it mightily.

"Nero—Nero!" cried Mrs. Harvey.

But Nero's blood was up.

He paid no heed.

"Drag him away, Tinker," she implored; "he will kill that wretched man."

"Yah—yah!"

"Do you hear?"

"Yes, Missie Harvey, deblish fine dat, de ugly feller no kill me den. Yah—yah! gib it him, Nero. Go it, Nero! him dam bad man!"

Nero wanted no encouraging to this end.

Bigamini's struggles grew fainter and fainter.

He battled feebly, instinctively, while the monkey was as fresh and as vigorous as ever.

He fastened at length upon the wretched spy's throat, and there he held him to the bitter end.

Bigamini fought no longer now.

His head fell back.

His arms hung helplessly at his side.

His eyes were starting from their sockets.

His tongue protruded.

A ghastly, sickly spectacle.

Bigamini, the murderer, convict and spy, was dead!

"Come away, Tinker," exclaimed Hilda, in accents of mingled awe and horror; "he has killed him."

"Yah—yah!" grinned Tinker. "Immense, big, splendid fellow, Nero. Me lub Nero; him better man dan that wicked spy."

They turned away.

And happily they reached the settlement without any further molestation.

And now you understand why we remarked upon the singular chance of Bigamini using the word monkey repeatedly in his memorable soliloquy, after starting upon this pursuit, destined to prove fatal to him.

CHAPTER X.

ANXIETIES—HOPES AND FEARS—A VISIT TO MR. MOLE'S MINE—WARNINGS OF DANGER—FOREWARNED, FOREARMED.

WHEN Hilda and Tinker reached the settlement, they found that there were no tidings whatever of Harvey or of Harkaway—nor, indeed, of any of the party who had gone in pursuit of her.

This was a sad result, indeed, after her happy escape from peril.

"There is no fear, mama," said little Emily, who, it need not be said, was overjoyed to see her mother again, "for they are so strong and so brave. Uncle Harkaway is with papa and Mr. Jefferson and numbers of our men, all armed, and brave as can be."

"I can't say that I fear," answered Hilda, "for, together, I don't believe that there are many that could oppose your father and brave Jack Harkaway. Harkaway!" she added; "why, there is music in the very name."

And so there was.

Traitors trembled at the sound, and true men grew enthusiastic in the praises of old Jack.

"Dad is safe enough," said young Jack, repeatedly.

This was not only to reassure his mother and their friends generally, but also to make himself easy in his mind, which he was very far from being at present.

Indeed, he had very serious doubts about it.

Anxiety was upon every face in the settlement.

At length they came to the resolve to send out a man in search of the absent friends.

One of their men volunteered for this service, and he was duly armed and furnished with provisions of the most portable character.

This done, they grew more easy in their minds.

"Another day," said Mrs. Harkaway, with a sigh of relief, "and we shall certainly have them with us again."

* * * * *

Another day passed.

Yet no tidings.

Two days more, and three men were started off in another direction.

A full code of signals was arranged with them, and every possible precaution was taken.

And this tended considerably to restore confidence in all their minds.

* * * * *

"Well," said Harry Girdwood, "I don't see the fun in making ourselves and everybody else wretched."

"Nor I."

"Nor dis chile!" said Tinker, with a precious long face; "I're cantank'rous, dam miserable!"

"Let's go to the gold mine, and see how old Mole is getting on."

"Good!"

Off they started, accompanied by Tinker.

Now Tinker's face lit up immediately, for when it was a question of visiting the old gentleman, the young darkey gave a pretty shrewd guess that it meant fun.

Fun or mischief—and they were much the same to Tinker.

Now they found Mr. Mole all alone, hard at it, digging away for bare life at his mine.

The new mine owner had certain difficulties to labor against, but he fought them manfully.

The pick he could ply with tolerable skill, and a certain amount of force.

But what baffled him, at first, was the

To drive it well into the earth, he had, of course, to press it hard with his timber-toe, and they wanted a deal of dodging.

He would lunge furiously at the edge of his shovel, and miss it five or six times in succession, to the infinite amusement of our fun-loving boys.

"If your mine doesn't turn up no more, say," said young Jack, with a sly look at his father, "you could yet turn your ground to good use."

Mr. Mole fidgeted nervously at this.

"What do you mean by that?"

"Only in case of accidents, sir," said young Jack.

"What then?"

"You could cultivate it wonderfully well."

Mr. Mole did not quite understand the allusion.

"You possess great natural advantages for gardening, sir; you understand?"

"No; that's it, my dear boy—I don't understand."

"Why, look how you could dibble in your cabbage-plants or potatoes, for instance," said Harkaway, junior, as he walked off.

Sold again!

Mr. Mole nearly choked with indignation.

But it was all thrown away, for young Jack was already out of hearing.

* * * * *

Mr. Mole had profited by this allusion to his infirmity.

Among the mechanics in the settlement was a very skilful wood-carver, and Mr. Mole had

this man to make him a pair of wooden feet.

like lasts upon which the boots and shoes are made.

These were so constructed as to screw firmly on to his wooden extremities.

And thus he vanquished the difficulty of digging with the spade.

"Well, sir," said Harry Girdwood, as they came up, "how do you progress?"

"Fairly, my boy, fairly," responded Mr. Mole, putting on a cheerful air, which was really not warranted by the amount of success he had met with.

"Many nuggets?"

Mr. Mole looked wonders.

If looks could be interpreted, Mr. Mole certainly meant to insinuate a mountain of gold.

"I'm glad it has turned out so well," said Harry Girdwood.

"Especially as we recommended it, Harry," said young Jack.

"You find lots o' brass, ole Massa Mole?" said Tinker.

Harry and young Jack felt just a bit uneasy at this familiar term for gold.

But Mr. Mole took it very good-naturedly.

"Lots," he replied, with a smile; "in fact—he—excuse my little joke, I shall have as much brass as you three put together—he-he!"

"Ha-ha-ha!" laughed Harry Girdwood, nudging Jack.

And then they laughed altogether.

Isaac Mole thought, in his innocence, that they were laughing with him, not at him.

"I must tell you, sir," said young Jack, with his most respectful manner, "that we had an object in coming here."

"Indeed?"

"Yes, sir."

"What is it?"

"The news of your wonderful mine has got all over the country, Mr. Mole," said young Jack.

"Gossiping fools, to talk of it; it might do no end of mischief."

"It has, sir," said Jack, seriously.

"Never!"

"Oh, indeed it has; in point of fact, sir, we have only now come to see if you fear molestation!"

"Molestation—where—what—from whom?"

"Morgan."

At the mention of the notorious bushranger's name, Mr. Mole jumped up like a parched pea in a fire shovel.

"Captain Morgan?"

"Yes, a fact, sir."

"Why, how the dence can he—"

A disagreeable feeling possessed him, and he could not finish his sentence.

"The danger, sir," said young Jack, deliberately, "from what I have heard, does not proceed from Morgan, directly."

"No?"

"No, sir; for, from information I have received—"

"It sounds just like Scotland Yard," said Mr. Mole.

"Yes, it does; unfortunately, you haven't Scotland Yard here to help you."

Young Jack's serious air and subdued manner duly impressed Mr. Mole.

"My dear boy," he said, "you surely don't mean to say—"

"Don't make yourself uneasy, sir; but the bushrangers have—so I have heard—employed a gang of the aborigines to drop down upon you."

"What?"

"A fact, sir; and so we came on to see if we could render any assistance. We didn't run very hard, for we knew that you were a match for a good many niggers, no matter what country they came from."

Mr. Mole at this pulled up his shirt-collar, and shot out his cuffs, with a pardonable gesture of pride.

"Rather?"

"And we were doubtful," said Harry Girdwood, "whether you would accept our assistance?"

"I'm very grateful for your offer," said Mr. Mole, with dignity; "but I rather flatter myself that I am more than a match for a good mob of niggers."

"I suppose, sir."

"It is not known to any of you how I tackled a whole tribe of North American Indians once."

"I remember something of it, sir," said young Jack, "but I forgot the details."

"You would, Jack, you would," said Mr. Mole, "it was just before you were born, Jack."

"It was, sir."

"I'll tell you, then," said the inventive Mole, "I was asleep in our log-house, alone—the rest of our party was away—when I was aroused by

the whistle of the savages. But I didn't make any fuss at all."

"No use."

"None," said Harry, pretending to be deeply interested.

"No; so I got up, and got into the loft, with my rifle. On they came, yelling discordantly. I distinguished the chief by his eagle-plume, and, by gad, I potted him!"

"You talk of an Indian chief, sir, as if he were a bloater."

"Or shrimps."

"Well, then, my dear boys, I reloaded, and blazed away again into the thick of them."

"Yes, sir."

"Then, when I had laid seven of them low, out I rushed, and made an awful row. 'Come on the rest of you!' I cried, as if there were hundreds behind me. I dashed at 'em, and, by the living jingo, I scalped seven-and-twenty before you could wink an eye."

"Lor!"

"Oh, golly—golly!" cried Tinker, evidently frightened.

"Seven-and-twenty, as I am a sinner!" said Mr. Mole.

"Dear—dear!"

"The other fifty fled as if the old gentleman had been after them, and—would you believe it, dear boys—"

"No, we shouldn't," said Harry, *sotto voce*.

"They actually left me alone, single-handed, master of the field!"

"That's as true as any of Mr. Mole's warlike exploits," said young Jack, tipping the wink to Harry.

"It never got very public," suggested Harry.

"No, publicity is not my desire," said Mr. Mole, with a lofty wave of the hand, "it never was."

"On their own merits modest men are dumb," quoted Jack.

"Precisely."

"Had it only become generally known," said Harry Girdwood, seriously, "Mr. Mole would have been put up as a candidate for the presidency."

"Not only put up," said young Jack, piling it on stiffly now, "but returned for a dead certainty."

"Oh," said Mr. Mole, "I am not vain or ambitious; if I were, there is no doubt but that I could have been elected."

"Your modesty, Mr. Mole, is too much," said young Jack.

"Well, then, I suppose, sir," said Harry, "our assistance, in case the niggers come down on you, would be of no good?"

"Perhaps it might," returned the old gentleman, with a snimper of vanity.

"Well, then, it only remains for us to go; we'll leave our pistols first, for we brought them purposely."

"That's very kind of you, Harry," said the old gentleman, "but I have no powder and shot."

"They are already loaded, sir."

He winked at Jack.

"But one charge might not be enough," said Mr. Mole.

"We have no more ammunition to leave you, sir."

They had particular reasons for not leaving powder and shot in Mole's clutches.

You will understand this presently.

"But you are well loaded," said young Jack, "and, with four pistols, you will be able to scatter a whole tribe of savages."

"Rather."

"You look awful cantankerous fierce, sar; look, sar, as though you eat up dozen niggers," said Tinker, pretending to tremble.

"I don't think they will venture too near me," said Mole.

"Look out for the night, sir," said Harry Girdwood.

"Don't close your eyes."

"I always sleep with the left one open," chuckled Mole.

So off went the boys.

CHAPTER XI.

AWFUL ENCOUNTER BETWEEN MR. MOLE AND THE SAVAGES—THE MYSTERIES OF THEIR TONGUE.

MR. MOLE chuckled quietly as they disappeared.

"I don't think that the niggers would relish a bout with Isaac Mole," he said, stoutly.

"The rough old commodore,"

The tough old commodore,

he warbled.

"Perhaps," he said to himself, his expression

losing something of its mirthful attribute, "perhaps it would be better if they came in the day. It is difficult to distinguish a dark man on a dark night, and a nigger and night are much the same color, and I hope they won't come in very great force, ahem!"

"Confound those beasts. I wish they would mind their own business instead of worrying about my diggings. And niggers are such very low-minded persons; they're not satisfied with getting the upper hand, they have such objectionable ways of gouging and scalping; that's what I have to complain of always."

He looked up at the setting sun, and then he looked at the settlement some distance away.

Ugh!

Why did he refuse the boys' assistance?

"I am such a rash, headstrong fool," he said to himself. "Pluck is all very well in its way, but really a man with a wife and family like me, ahem! ought to pay some respect to his skin. But rash daring was always my weakness; I am like some old war-horse, I can't smell fighting without snorting to be in it."

"Lord ha' mercy! what's that?"

A long, shrill note, a profound too-oo-woo. A sort of burlesque of the owl, and unmistakably rendered by a human throat. Mr. Mole had heard such a cry long years before.

Too well did he remember when, where, and under what dreadful circumstances.

It was in the Island of Limbi.

The war cry of the savages.

Horrible reminiscence, this, all things considered.

"Too-y-woo!"

"There it is again. Oh, Lord—oh, Lord!" exclaimed Mole, starting up aghast.

He had been hoping that he was deceived at first.

Now there could be no mistake about it.

In his little tent he kept a bugle with which he was wont to signal to Monday from the settlement when he was in need of anything.

So he blew a sharp note upon this at once, and waited the answer in some anxiety.

The answer came.

Monday was there, then, ready at hand in case of need.

"Pheugh!"

What a relief!

Mr. Mole could not deceive himself now; he was really alarmed.

He got out his telescope, and eagerly scanned the country around.

Yet no signs of any enemy could be perceived.

"Was it my fancy?" he said to himself. "Surely not, no. Hang it, that would look as if I was frightened, and I rather flatter myself that Isaac Mole is just about the last man in this part of the world to get frightened."

He looked under his blanket for something.

Not there.

Where could he have put it?

He routed out several nooks and corners in his tent, and finally produced from beneath a pile of straw a small stone bottle labeled "whiskey."

"I'm obliged to be a little bit sly," he said to himself. "Chloe is so dreadfully curious; the way she routs out every nook and corner of this place is most distressing to a man of my outspoken, frank, and truthful nature."

He poured out a little into a cup, and drained it off.

"Hah!" he said, smacking his lips in a sort of subdued ecstasy, "that's something like."

It is astounding how his spirits rose as the whiskey went down.

He grew valiant immediately.

"If they don't muster too strong," he said to himself, "twenty, perhaps—out joking apart, I don't think I could tackle more than twenty."

He got the whiskey again.

"Beastly weak this is," he said, taking out the cork; "been well watered before I got it. Awful thieves the dealers are. Why can't they content themselves with an honest profit?"

Hah!"

He took a suck.

"Two-thirds water."

The old gentleman got rather drowsy soon, and putting his loaded pistols handy, he settled himself down on his blankets to go to sleep.

"Let 'em come, yehaw," he yawned, "let 'em come—how the lot to smother 'em—yehaw—knock 'em into the middle of next week—yehaw, I'd knock 'em into the middle of next year."

And with similar bold resolves, he gradually sank back and slept.

* * * * *

"Too-y-who!"

"Too-y-who-oo!"

"Eh, what!" exclaimed Mr. Mole, drowsily; "come in, my dear, don't I hear?"

"Too-y-who!"
 "What's that?"
 "Wa-hoo!"

Mr. Mole sat bolt upright, and looked about him.

The alarming sound was repeated once more. "I was dreaming," he said, "dreaming that I was back in England; I wish I was."

"Too-y-who!"
 "Good Heaven! what a dreadful row."
 The awful sounds were close at hand this time. "The savages."

Yes, there could be no mistake about it now. Mr. Mole scrambled for his pistols.

Where were they?
 He dived under the blanket, under the straw, and all over the tent.

All in vain.
 He could not feel them.

The sounds of the approaching savages grew more and more distinct.

"Good Heaven!" gasped the old gentleman, "what a fool I was to drink that whiskey. Beastly strong stuff! Why, it must be over proof."

There was a wild, discordant yell outside, and lol at the entrance of the tent appeared three black forms.

Mole shrank back.
 Three horrible looking blacks, all besmeared with ghastly pigments.

Two carrying war clubs.
 The third with a bow and arrow, ready to let fly at the unhappy old gentleman.

"Oh-h-h!"

Mr. Mole gave a prolonged groan.
 "Don't, for mercy's sake!"

The three savages set up a fearful din, all three speaking at once, producing the most deafening Babel of incomprehensible sounds.

"Oh, goodness me!" cried poor Mole; "whatever will become of me?"

"Carajo caramba!" yelled the nigger with the bow and arrow.

"Dear me!" ejaculated Mole, "it's a Spanish savage."

One of the others carrying the war clubs advanced into the tent, flourishing his formidable weapon.

"Ker-chi ko kum kemeri thar cum totnam-ortrode?" yelled the savage.

Mole shut his eyes, groaning:
 "Oh, I'm a dead man."

Never were such sounds heard by mortal ears.

His time was come, he thought.
 The other savage came in with a bound.

"Wik wak wallah!" he shouted, dancing wildly around.

"Exactly so, my dear sir," said Mr. Mole, hoping to conciliate him; "exactly so, but do take a seat and rest yourself."

"Hikey pikey ticksey wick sheepsedantaters," remarked the savage.

"Never should have thought it, my dear sir," said Mole, in much the same manner that he would have assumed to conciliate a dangerous lunatic.

The third savage lowered his bow and bounded after his comrades.

He flew wildly around Mr. Mole, singing an awe-inspiring ditty.

Then he wound up by saying, in a menacing manner:

"Wah hoo, cantankrousbig duffah. Wah hoo!"

"Oh, Lor'!—oh, Lor'!" moaned Mole, in deep distress, "do keep still there, good fellows."

But the manner of the other savages tended a little to restore his confidence.

They appeared inclined to retreat.

"Harkaway!" said one of them.

"Harkaway!" said another.

"Yes, sir."

"Harkaway!" said a third.

"Harkaway!" said a fourth.

"Harkaway!" said a fifth.

"Harkaway!" said a sixth.

"Harkaway!" said a seventh.

"Harkaway!" said an eighth.

"Harkaway!" said a ninth.

"Harkaway!" said a tenth.

"Harkaway!" said an eleventh.

"Harkaway!" said a twelfth.

"Harkaway!" said a thirteenth.

"Harkaway!" said a fourteenth.

"Harkaway!" said a fifteenth.

The savage took out a knife about six inches long, and executed an Australian saraband.

"It's all up," said Mole. "Good-by, Chloe—good-by to the twins. Good-by to my dear Jack—to my dear Harvey. I shall never see them again."

The savage who had before held the bow and arrow, menacing the poor old gentleman, had by this time found the stone bottle and taken a suck at it.

The potent spirit made him cough, and choke, and sputter, and then its effects began to tell upon him immediately.

He talked wildly.

"Ole Massa Mole," he said, with a tipsy air.

"Yes," said Mr. Mole, looking up; "what is it, my worthy young savage! Only spare my life, and Mole will be your slave."

"Ole Massa Mole am a gallopshus ole sole."

"Goodness me!" ejaculated Mole; "I declare it sounds like Tinker."

The savage giggled.

"Yah—yah!"

That settled it.

Mole recognized him at once.

Filled with rage and indignation, the old gentleman got over his fright in some slight degree, for he made sure that Tinker had turned traitor.

He scrambled up, and before the others could guess what he was at, he made a rush and a blow at Tinker.

Had it taken effect, Tinker would have felt it; but that youthful nigger was knocked off his perch already by the strong drink, and at that very moment measured his length upon the ground.

Mole dashed past the savages to the door of the tent, and then blew a loud blast upon his bugle.

Then off he hobbled as fast as he could go.

The call was answered from the settlement.

"Saved—saved!" cried Mole.

He was not long in reaching his friends, you may be sure.

* * * * *

Now the savages made no attempt to follow him.

On the contrary, as soon as was gone, the other two followed Tinker's example by rolling on the ground, not in liquor, but in the wildest mirth.

They absolutely yelled with laughter.

And when they had had their laugh out, they went to the tub of water outside the tent and washed their faces and hands with all possible haste.

* * * * *

Mole came back followed by eight armed men.

The foremost were Sunday and Monday.

"Where are the thieves, sari?" demanded Monday.

"Let's get at 'em," said Sunday, pushing forward.

"Here they are, in the tent."

The armed men pushed Mr. Mole on.

The tent was entered and there they saw—

Young Jack and Harry Girdwood squatting on the floor washing Tinker's face and head with a wet towel.

"Jack!"

"Yes, sir," answered our young hero, looking up.

"And Harry!" ejaculated Mr. Mole. "Why, surely—"

"We've frightened the savages away, sir," said young Jack.

"You have!" exclaimed Mole; "there, I told you so," he added, turning to the men with him, "and yet, would you believe it, for a moment I half thought that you had had the impudence to—"

"Hikey pike wahditch and biled owl!" said young Jack.

"With a wak-wallah!" added Harry Girdwood.

Mole started.

"What?"

"Keri ki ko liveranbaken wallah!" said young Jack.

This was too much for the audience.

They burst into a regular yell of laughter.

Mr. Mole looked very sheepish.

Then very savage.

Then he thought it best to dissemble.

He knew that unless he could get out of the mess adroitly, he would never hear the last of it.

"Harkaway!" he groaned, "so you thought I didn't know you? Well, you wild dogs, I know you from the first."

"Come—come, I say, Mr. Mole," said Harry

Girdwood, "that won't do; you were in an awful fright."

"I," said Mr. Mole, loftily, "I should like to see the man that could ever boast of frightening Isaac Mole."

"Then why did you bring all these people with you?"

"Just to show them what fools you had made of yourselves."

But stand out as he would, he could not get over it, and it was many a long day before he heard the last of the savages' attack upon his diggings.

CHAPTER XII.

OLD JACK FALLS INTO TROUBLE—BURIED ALIVE—

WE must now return to Harkaway, Jefferson and Dick Harvey.

In the first place we must deal with Jack Harkaway.

Old Jack was the foremost of the expedition, a fact which will not by any means surprise our readers.

His ambition was to rescue his old friend's wife from the clutches of the villanous bushranger, Captain Morgan, to take her back to Dick, and watch the flush of happiness and of grateful mantle his honest cheek.

"I shall do it, too," said old Jack to himself.

Little did he know what had already taken place.

Little did he think that already Hilda was being cared for by that honest, but eccentric little nigger, Tinker.

Harkaway had got a pretty correct notion of the route his friends in advance were likely to travel, and he set out upon their track at a spanking rate.

But unfortunately he veered slightly in his course, with a very sad result.

Instead of coming up with his own party, he crossed the line of the bushranger's scouts.

The signal was passed from mouth to mouth, and before old Jack could realize what had occurred, he was toppled over by an unseen enemy and made prisoner.

"Got one of you," said a ruffian, bending over Harkaway; "you will do to begin with."

Jack saw he was, for the time, trapped.

"What's your price to let me go?" demanded old Jack.

The bushranger looked about him.

There were too many of his companions about for him to treat on such a subject.

"More than you could pay, I know. You can talk to Captain Morgan about that."

"Captain Morgan?"

"Yes."

"So I am his prisoner?"

"Yes."

"Let me see him."

"Presently."

"Is he away?"

"Not far."

"Very good. I wish to speak to him as soon as may be."

Old Jack's idea was that by a liberal outlay he might be enabled to induce the ruffians to part with their prisoner, Hilda.

For himself he thought little indeed at present.

While this thought was engrossing his whole attention, a voice suddenly exclaimed in his ears:

"So—so, old friend, we meet again once more!"

Harkaway gave a start as he looked up.

"Hunston!"

"Yes."

"You in league with my enemies, as you ever were!" said Harkaway, bitterly.

"Ay," responded Hunston; "and I hope I ever shall be."

"It is almost time that you repented of your evil ways," said Harkaway.

"I am going to begin my repentance shortly."

"When?"

"When I have squared accounts with you," replied Hunston.

"Ungrateful wretch!" ejaculated old Jack.

"Do you forget that I saved your life again and again after a succession of outrages when no man living would have pardoned?"

"Brag away—brag away," sneered Hunston.

"You play the part of good Samaritan, and you don't forget to nag about it. Pah! you were always a sickening cad with your cant, Harkaway."

The latter was silent.

A flush of honest indignation mantled his cheek.

"Your good opinion, Hunston," he said, "would be my condemnation—your condemnation is the real compliment."

This made Hunston writhe.

He could not subdue Harkaway's courage.

"You can brag, Jack Harkaway," said Hunston, grinning with fiend-like pleasure as a horrible thought crossed him; "out I've got one in store for you that shall make you shake from top to toe like an aspen leaf."

Harkaway did not even deign to reply.

"Dig the grave," said Hunston, turning to the bushrangers.

"What! a grave?"

Harkaway heard it, as it was meant he should.

But he could not believe it possible that—

No—no.

This was part of Hunston's programme to make him show the white feather.

But there wasn't such an article in the Harkaway wardrobe, as old Jack's friends had often remarked.

The men proceeded leisurely to dig the grave.

From time to time, Hunston would watch his old foe to see if there were any symptoms of fear about him.

But not a quiver of an eyelid betrayed that old Jack realized what was passing.

Nor did he.

He knew that he was in peril.

Instinctively he felt the gravity of his position.

Yet little did he anticipate the fiend-like cruelty meditated by the heartless villain whom he had forgiven forty times and more, and whose miserable life he had saved over and over again.

"There," said Hunston, "that will do. I don't want it too deep."

"Why, it will hardly cover him in," returned one of the grave diggers.

That's what I want."

How so?"

"I only wish to nearly cover him. Leave his head a little out, so that he may not die too quickly, else he'll not taste all the horrors of death to their full extent."

Harkaway felt a little uneasy.

Well he might.

The words of the ruffian implied a dreadful death.

Yet he could not be mistaken.

He was to be buried alive.

Buried alive!

Does the reader fully realize the horrible thought?

It is not easy to grapple with such a hideous reflection.

Yet this was Hunston's determination.

Harkaway, his hated enemy, the one man upon earth for whom he had nurtured the bitterest enmity for a whole generation, was now in his power, and he should taste the bitterness of a lingering death.

Death in its most dreadful form.

Slow torture.

"In with him!"

"Ready," said the grave diggers.

The bushrangers seized the prisoner by the shoulders and feet, and dragged him into the newly-dug grave.

Brave old Jack never uttered a word; he was bound hand and foot.

He could not escape from the bushrangers, who surrounded him on all sides.

Yet he disdained to show the white feather to this heartless, merciless ruffian who had, in cold blood, conspired to take his life.

"Now, beg your life, Jack Harkaway," said Hunston.

Old Jack smiled.

A quiet, smiling smile, far more galling to his enemy than any words would have been.

"Beg your life."

"Of your life."

"Of your life."

"I wouldn't be beholden to you even for that."

Hunston turned livid with rage, and advanced to strike him, but Jack's bold look made the villain lower his arm.

"Isn't in the grave."

Two grave diggers obeyed orders.

A few spadefuls of earth were thrown over old Jack, and then Hunston bade them hold.

"Now, beg your life, Jack Harkaway, of Hunston."

No answer.

"Ask for mercy, Jack Harkaway," he said, "and perhaps I may relent."

"Bah!"

Hunston held the best end of the rope this time, it is true, yet, never at his worst strait, did he suffer more than now.

Hunston felt rage, humiliation, disappointment, all—all together.

Nothing could subdue the valorous soul of brave Jack Harkaway.

"Fill in his grave quick this time," said Hunston.

"Ay—ay, let's get it over."

The spades went to work—such spades as they had—and the unfortunate captive's body was rapidly covered.

"Not over his head."

The eagerness of this showed the villain's intentions clearly enough.

Slow torture!

By that, was the death to which he doomed Harkaway.

Where were his comrades now?

Where was Harvey?

Where was the bold and stalwart Jefferson?

Miles and miles away from this, probably.

But would Morgan and the rest of the bushrangers approve of Hunston's thus gratifying his own present spite, and sacrificing the interests of the gang?

Surely not.

The thought had barely crossed him, when he gave a terrific cry—a yell so loud and so sudden that the ruffians commanded by Hunston fell back affrighted.

"Help! To the rescue of Harkaway!"

It echoed all around the place.

But no answer came.

No signs of help.

They piled on the earth, and poor old Jack gave himself up for dead, but his courage was still with him.

"At last, Jack Harkaway," said Hunston, "at last, after waiting all these years, after going all over the world for it, I have achieved the one absorbing idea of my life. You are done for. Die—die, good Harkaway," he added, grinning with the intensity of his bitterness, "die like a rat in a trap, but with never a bit of cheese to nibble at—with never a chance of gnawing yourself free. Die, knowing that it is I, Hunston, your old school-fellow, that doomed you to death."

Poor old Jack.

Never a word did he speak.

He gave his villainous enemy a proud, defiant look, even while despair settled on him.

CHAPTER XIII.

IN THE NICK OF TIME—JEFFERSON TO THE RESCUE—A FATAL FLIGHT—TWO TO TWELVE—ROUT OF THE BUSHRANGERS, AND DEATH OF JEFFERSON.

"HARK!"

"What is it?"

"Didn't you hear that?"

"What?"

"I could almost swear I heard a cry."

"Fancy."

"Perhaps," answered Jefferson; "yet I thought—"

He listened intently again, and a second cry came, fainter even than the first.

Yet it was sufficiently distinct to indicate the direction from whence it came.

"I could swear that I heard it," said Jefferson, with an air of conviction; "moreover, Harvey, I feel sure that it is a familiar cry."

"Whose?"

"Jack's."

Harvey stared.

"Why, Jefferson," he said, "if you did really hear anything, it was so faint that you could certainly not say what it was, even if it was a human voice."

Jefferson made some impatient rejoinder, and looked to his fire-arms.

"I am so certain of it," he said, "that I am going off to try to be in time."

"In time for what?"

"To save him."

"What?"

"Jack."

Harvey looked upon his companion as mad.

"If you hear my revolver fired twice," said Jefferson, "come up as fast as you can, for I may want help."

And before they could say anything more, Jefferson had gone.

He started off at a run, and soon disappeared.

He had passed years in the backwoods, and his hearing was more acute than that of Dick Harvey, or, indeed, of any ordinary hunter, and soon he heard sounds confirming his suspicions.

More cries, louder and more distinct than ever.

Ay, and the voice was now unmistakable.

"Jack Harkaway's voice, for a million!"

He rechecked his speed, and got over the ground like lightning, until, at length, he was

startled by hearing a diabolical sound of triumphant laughter.

This was followed by a noisy demonstration, in which some half dozen voices joined.

"Strangers!" exclaimed Jefferson, in alarm; "then Harkaway is in the hands of the Philistines, as I feared. What shall I do? Signal Harvey and the men, or—no—no, I will keep my two shots, for I may want them, and they might alarm the enemy to no good."

On he ran until he came to the top of a hill, upon the further side of which a tragedy was being performed.

There was Hunston and his mob of ruffians engaged in burying poor Harkaway alive.

Jefferson took in the scene at a single glance.

He was so close that he was within pistol-shot.

Out came his revolvers, and taking a rapid, but yet careful aim, he let fly.

Bang—bang! they went.

A cry of mingled pain and surprise came from the bushrangers, as they looked up.

"Halloo, ho, Harvey!" yelled Jefferson.

And down the steep declivity he tore.

"Harvey—Harvey!" he shouted, as he ran. "Rescue—rescue! Courage, Jack, old boy; here's help."

"Jefferson," replied Harkaway, faintly.

"Right, Jack."

Hunston turned pale at the sound.

His first impulse was to fly; but shame stayed him.

"Don't run away," said the men, "stay and fight it out."

Two of the bushrangers were down with the first fire.

But now getting in better range, Jefferson blazed away again.

Down went another, howling with pain.

Now we do not mean to say that they would have run away from a single enemy, but in the suddenness of Jefferson's attack, they felt sure that he was followed by a large party, and so they all—with the exception, of course, of the three wounded men—turned and fled.

Jefferson flew up to the grave, and tore wildly at the earth.

It had been thrown loosely over the victim, and so to release him was not a very long nor a very difficult job.

One stroke of his long bowie knife loosened the thongs which bound him.

"God bless you, Jefferson," said Harkaway; "you have saved me."

Before Jefferson could make any reply, a loud outcry from the enemy attracted their attention.

"Look out, Jack, my boy," cried Jefferson, "they are coming, and we must fight for life."

"Curs!" cried one of the wounded, who was writhing upon the ground. "Eight men run away from one. He is alone."

The flying bushrangers did not want this information, however.

The first fright over, they saw that their alarm was unnecessary. Back they came.

"Look out, Jack, my boy," said Jefferson.

"All right, old friend."

"Take this, Jack."

He thrust his pistol into Harkaway's hand.

The bushrangers came on with a rush.

A shot, at close quarters, was fired from the enemy, and an involuntary cry escaped Jefferson.

"Heaven!" he exclaimed; "I am hit hard, Jack."

"Miscreants!" cried old Jack; "they shall pay bitterly for that."

Snatching up the nearest weapon to hand—one of the spades which had been employed in digging his grave—he dashed rapidly to meet the foe.

Jefferson pulled himself together.

"Now for it."

Nearing them, old Jack made a sudden rush forward, and firing his revolver right into the thick of the rascals, then he fell upon them with his spade.

Two broken heads were the result of his first attack.

Up came Jefferson just as Hunston was reeling back with the shock, and shooting out his hammer fist, he grassed the traitor like a butcher fells an ox.

The bushrangers were one and all big, powerful fellows; men, in a word, who could always hold their own.

But they had not been accustomed to see such fighting men as Jefferson and Jack Harkaway.

The former went in for all around fighting, abandoning his pistols and knife, and there was

scarcely a man there present but received striking proofs of his prowess.

In less time than it takes us to record the fact, there was not a sound pate present.

He shot out at their heads, and the proofs of the exactness of his aim were shown in bleeding mouths, and flattened noses, while there was scarcely an eye but what was rapidly going into mourning.

Nor was Harkaway idle, as you may suppose.

He did not dispense his favors as evenly as Jefferson.

He singled out such of the ruffians as had shown him the greatest cruelty, and he peppered them in a way that they never forgot.

"Murder!" yelled one of the most cruelly used.

"Take that!" cried Jefferson.

He took it.

It was not at all nice, nor would the man have taken it had he been able to do as he liked.

But it was not a matter of choice.

That was simply a knock on the head, which threatened to put an end to his tricks for many a day.

Down he went, like a stone in a pond.

Now while the fight was going on thus well for our friends, Jefferson and Harkaway—for they had scarcely received a scratch after Jefferson's shot, of which more anon—the bold American gave a sudden cry of anguish.

Down he went.

Hunston, who was sprawling upon the ground, had dealt him a treacherous stroke across the leg with his long knife that had severed the tendons of his knee.

But the dealer of this fatal stroke soon repented of it.

Jefferson fell half upon him.

Barely wounded though he was, he had yet strength enough left to hammer away at the enemy's face.

And soon the villain Hunston was battered out of all recognition.

One of the friends being down, it soon became very hot work for the other.

Poor old Jack was sorely pressed by the enemy.

Yet he contrived to keep them at bay pretty fairly, for he had a strong and dexterous right arm, which they one and all had learned to dread.

"Shoot him down!" shouted one of the villains.

"Who has got a pistol?"

"I have."

"Fire away, then."

A sharp report followed this appeal closely.

But happily the bullet whizzed close to old Jack's ear without doing him any damage.

An inch nearer and it would have been awkward.

Harkaway dropped on them in reply.

Ding, dong, he went at the man with the pistol, and his fists did not do as the bullet had done.

They did not whistle past him, but came straight home, and made the wretched possessor of the pistol bitterly repent ever having fired that shot.

The first blow from old Jack's left knocked his head completely out of the square.

The man lived long after.

But he never got over the crack in the neck which that doughty blow gave him.

Old Jack was on his hands.

It was a rare sight to see him drop into those ruffians.

How it would have gladdened the heart of some of his old schoolfellows, and his old college chums, too.

"Jack," called the poor maimed Jefferson, faintly, for his strength was nearly spent.

Harkaway heard him.

But his attention was given to the three cowardly villains, who were endeavoring to topple him over, and he could not even reply for the moment.

"Jack, I—I—lend a hand. It's all over with your old friend Jefferson."

Harkaway gave a heartrending cry.

The words gave him a fresh energy—the energy of despair.

Turning at his adversaries, he scattered them and ran to Jefferson.

One of the wounded men had spitted him with a knife as they lay side by side upon the ground.

And now the life blood was oozing fast from the fatal wound.

It was a piteous sight.

Harkaway saw the fatal knife, reeking with

the bold American's blood, and it filled them with madness.

He fell upon the destroyer with deep rage in his heart, and gave him no mercy.

But this act nearly cost him his own life, for the rest of the men were upon him in an instant, and he was borne to the ground and overpowered.

* * * * *

Suddenly there were four or five shots fired in rapid succession.

A party of armed men came down the hill at a desperate pace.

It was Harvey and his friends.

The bushrangers, now reduced to three, vainly endeavored to fly.

There was not a sound man amongst them, for Jefferson and old Jack had so dealt upon them that they could not get over the ground very fast.

Before they could get a dozen yards, they were shot down or beaten to the ground.

The victory was, after all, with our friends.

But ah, at what terrible price!

Harkaway had three wounds, ugly to look at, but not dangerous.

Alas for poor Jefferson!

He was one mass of wounds, from head to toe.

The knife and the bullet had done their work.

"Harvey," said Jefferson, faintly, "give me something to drink. I shall choke with thirst."

A flask of brandy was placed to his lips, and he drank freely.

The ardent spirit appeared to revive him.

"Hah! that's brave," he said, speaking with evident difficulty for a minute or two. "It can't last long."

"Come—come, Jeff," said Dick; "it isn't so bad as that."

"It is, though," returned the dying man, seriously. "Where's Jack?"

"Here, Jefferson," said Harkaway.

"Much damaged?" asked the brave American, with a faint smile of recognition.

"No—no; knocked about."

"But not fatal?"

"I trust not."

"Heaven be thanked!" returned Jefferson, earnestly, "for the sake of your poor wife and your boy. Jack, old friend, I am going home fast," he went on seriously. "I begin to see clearly, now, on a certain point."

"What?"

"You must leave these wild scenes. A family man has no right to play pitch-and-toss with his life like that. For me it is very different. I had nothing to live for, and I sha'n't live long."

Here he smiled grimly.

"Yes, you will, you must, for all our sakes," cried Harkaway.

"Not I. I feel I am about leaving you all in this world for ever."

"No—no."

"Yes, it is so. That last dig was quite enough to do for me, if I hadn't received my quantity before, which I had. But we have peppered them royally, Jack, old boy."

"We did—we did," returned Harkaway, pressing his hand.

"Harvey."

"Yes, Jefferson."

"Give me another pull at the bottle, while you count up the field."

Harvey obeyed.

Another drink gave the brave man renewed strength, and he awaited Harvey's reply with apparent eagerness.

"Eleven of them."

"Huzzah!" cried the dying American. "That's something. By Heaven, Jack, these vagabond bushrangers will learn to respect the name of Harkaway for evermore."

The effect cost him dearly, and as the last word passed his lips, Jefferson sank back pale and breathless.

"Jack."

"Yes."

"Here, Jeff."

"Give me your hand—a hand each," said the brave fellow, looking up into their faces. "The end is near—a few moments only, and it will be farewell."

"Jeff—Jeff," exclaimed Harvey, averting his face, "you'll break my heart."

"Don't be a fool, Dick," returned the dying man, clenching his hand with quaint solemnity.

"Don't regret me, dear boys. Why, if I had to choose my death this minute, I could not hit upon one half so glorious. I have learned to love you, Jack, as a brother, and to me it is a happiness to have fallen in saving you. God bless you, Jack!"

Harkaway returned his grip in silence.

His heart was far too full for words.

"You'll have to put me in the grave they dug for Jack," he said, turning to Dick Harvey, with a sad smile. "An odd fancy, that. Good-by! Think of poor Jeff sometimes, and never regret this glorious day. I'm going to rejoin my dear friend, Brand—poor little Magog! a dear friend to me—and to go to him above, in a better and brighter world, takes away what little bitterness death has for me. Jack, dear boy—Dick—"

His voice grew fainter.

A film gathered over his eyes.

He tried to speak again.

But, although his lips moved, no sound came.

It was too late.

A faint, spasmodic quiver of the lips, and the bravest heart that ever beat was still forever.

The bold Jefferson had gone to rejoin his friend, Magog Brand, in real earnest.

* * * * *

Slowly—reverently they laid the dead brave fellow in the grave ready dug.

The only funeral service given over him was a silent prayer and the bitter tears of his heart-broken friends and comrades.

"Farewell, dear—dear Jefferson!" wailed Harkaway. "We shall never look upon such a friend as you again."

"Never," iterated Harvey, bitterly—"never!"

"Peace be to his ashes!"

CHAPTER XIV.

MR. MOLE HAS A WONDERFUL ADVENTURE—HOW TINKER FISHED HIM OUT—A WICKED HOAX.

UNEASINESS prevailed in the settlement.

Day after day passed by, and no news of Jack or Dick.

Young Jack and his friend, Harry Girdwood, did their best to reassure Mrs. Harkaway and the ladies generally.

They were, however, far from comfortable in their own minds.

Where could they be?

Why was there no message?

Some terrible mishap, doubtless, had occurred.

The only person in all the settlement who appeared to take it less to heart than all the rest, was Tinker.

The black boy was not wanting in sympathy nor kindly instincts; but he constantly repeated that it was not so easy to get over the ground as they supposed.

Now so lightly did Tinker take the matter—such was his boundless confidence in his master, old Jack, and in Jefferson, Harvey, and the rest—that he kept up his pranks, and kept the settlement generally in a state of commotion by one particular experiment.

He rigged himself up a tent close beside Mr. Mole's, and into this tent, in the dead of night, he conveyed a pick and spade, and a variety of tools.

Mr. Mole eyed that tent with distrust, for Tinker had shown him that he was an adept in the villainous art of practical joking.

Still Tinker kept to his own tent, and never by any chance ventured to intrude upon Mr. Mole.

Meanwhile, Tinker worked as hard as a galley-slave under his own canvas.

No one could guess at what.

Tinker was close.

"Close as wax, sar, dis bewful, lubly chile, sar," he said, with a grin, to anyone who tried to fathom him. Mr. Mole was uneasy.

From Tinker's tent came forth the most discordant sounds, which continually reminded Mr. Mole of that attack upon his mine by the sham savages.

And when he showed at the tent door, the black boy showed very evident signs of having worked very hard. Worked at what?

Mole grew more and more uneasy in his mind.

Was there some fresh conspiracy hatching?

"That beast of a black boy means mischief. I know," said Mole to himself, repeatedly. "Does he mean to rob me?"

Dreadful thought.

Poor old Mole dared not leave his mine.

Waking or sleeping, he dare not leave it.

He ate in it.

He drank in it, and wrapped in a thick blanket, he slept in it, and during his sleep, young Jack and Harry would creep in silently, and in the earth place a few small bits of the old brass candlestick just to encourage old Mole in his search for gold.

Now, although Mole's property had been desig-

nated the mine, the reader must not suppose it was an excavation of any great depth.

The mine consisted of a hole some ten feet span, at the bottom of which was a smaller excavation two feet in circumference, and perhaps about the same depth.

Here it was, Mr. Mole was convinced, lay the metal, which was to reward him for all he had suffered and undergone in the past.

This was now a spot most jealously guarded by the mine owner, who sat on the side of the pit with his feet in the hole at the bottom of it.

"Now if I drop off to sleep," said the wary Mole to himself, with a chuckle, "I'll defy Master Tinker or any of the robbers to come and play tricks with my property, without disturbing me."

"Ya-awh, it's astonishing how drowsy I feel," Mr. Mole, yawning. "I shall knock myself out if I don't look out—ya-awh!"

* * * * *

Tinker plied pick and spade.

He was always at it.

And why?

There was a reason for it, and that reason was shortly to appear.

"Golly, ain't I wicked!" he said to himself, as he paused in his self-set labor. "Cantankerous big, naughty, spiteful I am. Yah—yah!"

He stopped suddenly short in his laugh.

"Who's dar?"

"It's only me, Tinker," answered a familiar voice.

"Massa Jack?"

"Yes," said our youthful hero; "and Harry's with me."

"What you want?" asked the black boy, running up to meet him, so as to prevent him taking a close observation of his work.

"We only want to know what you are doing?"

"Have you found a gold mine, too?" asked Harry.

Tinker replied with a suppressed grin, that rumbled audibly in his inside, as though it threatened some volcanic eruption.

"Massa Jack," said Tinker, pulling a hypocritical face, "I see awful wicked jest."

"We know that you're awful wicked, Tinker," said Harry Girdwood.

"Now tell us what you are after here," said young Jack.

"You tell nobody?" said Tinker, in a whisper.

"No."

"An' you, Massa Harry?"

"No—no."

This assured Tinker drew near to whisper to them his mysterious secret.

But the joke of the situation so tickled his fancy, that he couldn't get a word out for himself.

"Golly, I spects I s'gwine to bust right up and laughing," he said, holding his sides.

"Well, out with it, Tinker," said young Jack, impatiently, "and let us 'bust up' with you."

"Look hyar," said the black boy, leading into his digging. "Look at dis hyar funnel."

"Funnel! Oh, you mean tunnel," said Harry.

"Yes, I mean tunnel," said Harry.

"I want to see it," said young Jack.

"Well, it's right away to—"

"There it is," said he, pointing to a whisper, and in young Jack's ear.

Harry heard it, too.

And these three young boys laughed until they held their sides.

* * * * *

Mr. Mole was alone.

And then the unearthly sounds issuing from the next tent aroused him.

"Thought I heard something," he muttered.

"Certainly thought I heard a noise. Very odd. Strange things happen to people. I'm just as if I was taking a foot bath. Ha-ha-ha!"

The idea tickled him.

"Just like a foot bath, for all the world. Fancy washing my wooden legs. Ha-ha-ha!"

* * * * *

As Mr. Mole approached a singular event occurred.

His foot was pierced by a sharp object.

It was a piece, and presently some

thing came and quicker with a gurgling

sound, until the hole at the bottom of the pit was full.

A foot bath.

It was indeed a foot bath with a vengeance.

While the wooden limbs were bathed it was all very well, but the water rose higher, until it reached his flesh.

And then it struck a sudden chill to him, that caused him to rouse up with a shiver.

"What an extraordinary feeling!" he exclaimed; "just for all the world as if I was sitting in cold water—halloo!"

He stared in utter amazement.

What could it mean?

The water rose higher and higher, until it covered his legs and thighs.

This aroused Mr. Mole thoroughly, and he gave a mighty jump out of the hole.

But the water had made it slippery at the edges, and down he flopped faster than he could get up.

But this time, he went sprawling full length in the hole, only to scramble up again spluttering and puffing.

A miserably ludicrous aspect he presented, when he got up, too.

And the water was still rising.

He clutched frantically at the edge of the mine, but the earth crumbled in his fingers, and down he went again.

"Help!" he shouted. "Help—help! Something's the matter with my gold mine. Help—help!"

Had poor Mole been less frightened, he might have heard Tinker's triumphant laughter.

"Tinker!" cried Mole, wildly, as the water arose higher and higher. "Tinker! Help, good, kind Tinker! come and help your old friend Mole."

Tinker came running out of his tent, followed by Harry Girdwood and young Jack.

"Oh, Lor'—oh, Lor', Massa Jack!" cried Tinker, seemingly in the greatest surprise. "Jas' look hyar. Hyar's Massa Mole a swimmin' like mad."

"Pull me out, you young villain!" yelled Mole.

"What yar washin' yerself for, Massa Mole?" inquired Tinker.

Mole made a grab upwards, but missing his hold, down he dropped again, and was covered with water.

"Beast!" he cried, as soon as he could get his breath. "Pull me out, you young black beast!"

"Yes, sar," answered Tinker, as coolly as if the matter was one of no urgency whatever.

"Want to get my fishin' rod?"

"You devil!" cried poor Mole, "I'll have you whipped."

"Yah—yah!" laughed Tinker.

"You'll suffer for this."

Tinker laughed in his aggravating way, and took an elaborate double sight at Mole, who writhed with rage and with the unpleasantness of the situation.

"The water is rushing in quicker. I shall be drowned. Help me out, oh! I'll kill you!" yelled Mole, shaking his fist at him.

"Den I no get you out," cried Tinker, running away.

"Tinker—Tinker!" cried Mole. "Good Tinker, do help me out."

Tinker slowly returned.

"Dat's better," he said. "And now," he added, gravely wagging his forefinger at the unfortunate gold digger, "you be good boy for the few—"

"Yes—yes!" gasped Mole.

"Den out you come."

Saying which, he let down a rope, and pulled the old gentleman out.

Once free from the water, he hoisted him up, until Jack and Harry were within reach, and they helped to drag him free.

Tinker sat on the ground, laughing at the miserable figure old Mole cut at that moment.

CHAPTER XV.

MR. MOLE MAKES AN AWFUL DISCOVERY—THE TEST OF THE GOLD AND THE EXTINGUISHER NUGGET.

"WHY, however did the accident happen, sir?" asked Harry Girdwood.

"I struck on a spring, I suppose," replied Mole.

"That's no spring, it's a spring of water," said Harry.

"No doubt, sir."

"Good lot of springs, Massa Mole," said Tinker, grinning.

"I should almost think so," said Mr. Mole, shaking the water off his hair and face. "Now, look here, Tinker."

"Yes, sar."

"Just you run up to the big house and get me a change of clothing."

"Yes, sar. Oh, sar, I tell you what you look like, sar; you look like a splendiferous water mole, sar; yah—yah!"

"Fly."

"Yes, sar."

Tinker ran off, just in time to save himself from a lump of mud Mole was about to throw at him. And while he was gone, Harry and young Jack strolled around Mr. Mole's gold and water mine.

No sooner were they gone than Mr. Mole was seized with a fit of curiosity.

"What can that boy Tinker have been after there?" he muttered to himself.

So looking about him to see that Harry and young Jack were occupied elsewhere, he stepped into the tent and—

"Goodness me!"

There was a huge hole in the ground which almost rivalled the mine itself.

"This is a very singular thing," said Mr. Mole, aloud. "Niggers and monkeys are almost kindred. This young Tinker has been seized with a fit of imitation. He's been digging because I've been digging."

He drew nearer.

The excavation which Tinker had so labored at went in a slanting direction so as to reach, at the bottom, the depths of Mr. Mole's celebrated mine.

This was a very singular fact to Mr. Mole.

"There's something in that," muttered the old gold seeker to himself. "Some deep villany. Why, what can this be?"

A pipe.

An iron pipe, and fitted into the top of it an immense funnel which seemed to indicate that it had been used as a water pipe.

Mole staggered back and looked about the tent, when his eyes dropped onto a big tub of water, half sunk in the ground, close by the pipe and funnel, but which had been momentarily concealed from view by a mound of the earth thrown up out of the tunnel.

"There's something in this more than meets the eye," said Mr. Mole, to himself. "That tub is to supply the water which is poured down the pipe by means of the funnel. That is clear enough. But where the deuce does this water-pipe lead to? Where? Unless into my gold mine?"

It flashed across him at once.

And as the trick dawned upon his startled imagination, he could only find one word in which to express his utter disgust and indignation.

"The little black beast!"

As this epithet escaped him, he heard the voice of Tinker, shouting:

"Where am de ole water Mole?"

"Come along, Tinker," cried young Jack. "What a long time you have been."

"De lubly Missie Mole wouldn't gib me de Mole's fings."

"Little beast," muttered Mole, under his breath, "I'll 'fings' you."

By this the irate old gentleman meant to convey a novel form of punishment which Tinker was very far from expecting.

He quietly dipped a pail of water from the tub and waited.

Crouched up behind Tinker's own tent. Holding Tinker's own pail of water.

"Where is Massa Mole?"

"Isn't he there?" demanded Harry Girdwood.

"No."

"Look around."

"He ain't dere, by golly," said Tinker. "And I s'got such gollopshus bewful close for him, all dry and warm—ha, ooh!"

The latter ejaculation was elicited by the sudden dashing of the bucket of water from behind the tent into the young darkey's face.

"Take that, and that," cried Mole, rushing out and giving the surprised Tinker a vicious thump with the now empty bucket; "undermine me, will you? Flood my property? Make a water mole of me, and try to drown me, will you? Take that, and that."

And as he spoke he held the bucket aloft.

Tinker scrambled up when the first surprise was over, and bolted off to a safe distance.

"Ugly ole man, with nasty legs," cried the snorting Tinker, taking a sight.

This aggravated Mole again, and around he went after him at a dashing rate.

But Tinker was an awkward customer to try on a race with, for he dodged and doubled in a way that would have surprised the most active people.

He was here, there, and everywhere in a jiffy.

Presently he was down.

"I have you now," exclaimed Mole.

No. Mr. Mole had not got Tinker, for that active black youth nimbly rolled aside and was on his feet in an instant.

Then he waited until the old gentleman was close upon him, and bolted off just as the other thought he had him in his clutches.

At length, Mr. Mole, fairly pumped out, was obliged to sit down and pant for breath.

"You young black viper," gasped Mole, "I'll have you tied up and flogged within an inch of your life."

"Yah! ooh! you turn old nigger hunter," jeered Tinker, from a safe distance.

"Bring me my dry clothes, my boy."

Tinker never moved.

"Do you hear, sir?"

"Yes, sar. Dis chile hear bewful, only he don't come."

Threats being of no avail, Mr. Mole called for assistance to young Jack and his companion, who stood near enjoying the scene.

"Bring me my dry clothes, Jack, my boy."

"Can't, sir."

"Why?"

"They're wet."

"Why, you don't mean to say that that beast of a boy—"

"Not a beast, sir," replied Jack. "You wetted them yourself when you doused the water over that rude Tinker."

Mole groaned.

"I shall catch the lumbago, and tiedoloreux, and sciatica, and all the rest of it," he answered.

"Yes, sar," grinned Tinker, "you get de tic-bago an' de asiatica, an' all de family of dem tic-bago."

"Fiend!" yelled Mole.

"Yes, sar."

"Devil!"

"Yah—yah! dat's me, sar," responded Tinker, cheerfully.

Mr. Mole tried threats and denunciations until he saw that it was of no avail.

And then he returned to coaxing, and in this way was happily more successful.

Tinker was induced to make a second journey to the house for more garments, and so Mr. Mole got a dry rig-out.

"My opinion is," said Mr. Mole, dubiously, "that you are all in this job."

Young Jack and Harry Girdwood protested their innocence; but protested in vain.

"I wouldn't believe you on oath," said Mr. Mole; "not either of you, but I'll tell you what. I'll look over it all on two conditions."

"What are they, sir?"

"Firstly, that you help me undo the mischief you have caused."

"And next?"

"That when you have helped me draw off the water, you don't mention a word of this to anybody."

This they willingly agreed to.

They set to work with a will, and it was a very short job.

The water sank into the earth when they had got a bucket or two of it out.

So that it was all but a matter of a few hours' work.

When the mine was clear, they set to work digging with Mr. Mole, and strange to relate, they had not been long at work when they came to the nugget.

Young Jack was standing very close to a new party of bushrangers, and Mr. Mole, who had been digging for some time, was very successful in finding the nugget.

"What's that?"

"A nugget, sar."

"A nugget?"

"Yes, sar."

He then showed Mr. Mole the nugget.

He then showed the nugget to the bushrangers, who were all very much interested.

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"Lubly gold, dat sar. Tinker glad to turn water mole to get such lubly gold."

"You—you—you—"

He had exhausted his vocabulary of abuse, and could not think of any name vile enough for the black boy.

"Bewful, gollopshus nugget, dat 'stinguisher, Massa Mole."

Mole groaned.

He said never a word, but scrambled out of the diggings and went into his tent, where the bag of small nuggets was hidden.

Dragging it out, he applied the tests—it is strange that he should not have thought of it before, but he had had no suspicions of trickery—and it all proved to be like the extingisher.

Candlestick gold, melted down by Jack and Harry.

His anguish on making this discovery could only find vent in one word:

"Sold!"

He was.

"It's a robbery, too," he exclaimed in his indignation, "an infamous conspiracy and a robbery—those boys were in it. I'll have them all trounced—Harkaway shall know of it."

He paused.

If Harkaway knew of it, the tale would fly all over the settlement, and he would not dare to show his face for months.

When he reflected, he felt rather ashamed of the greed of gain that he had shown in his purchase of the mine.

He knew that he had been chuckling over the way in which he had got such a grand bargain out of those two unsophisticated darkeys, Sunday and Monday—at least he thought—and he knew that on that ground he was not justified in making it a ground of serious complaint.

But he could not swallow the transaction.

"Listen to me, you boys," he said, severely.

"We're listenin', sar," responded Tinker, promptly.

"I didn't speak to you," retorted Mr. Mole, tartly.

"No, sar; dis lubly chile spoke to you, sar."

"Hold your tongue."

"Bress my hart," said Tinker, "ain't Massa Mole in a immense cantankerous big temper? Yah, Tinker run and fetch some rum to mix wid de water Massa Mole swallowed, yah—yah!"

"You have been joining in a swindle," said Mr. Mole, not deigning to notice the irrepressible Tinker. "That's just what your practical joking has led you into."

"A swindle?"

"Yes."

"But you haven't read Monday's letter."

"What letter?"

"He told me that he had left a letter for you in the tent."

"My tent?"

"Yes."

Mr. Mole ran back to the tent and looked eagerly about him.

"There it is."

Yes, there it was; a big white paper, pinned with a wooden shaver to the canvas wall of the tent in a prominent place enough, but one which had hitherto escaped Mr. Mole's attention.

"DEAR BRUDDER MOLE:

"You wanted to buy a gold mine for nuffin or thereabout, and so you was sold yesself. I can't rob my own relashin, an' so I return your money, less the price of the candlestick. An' we don't charge nuffin for de amusatation [probably the writer meant 'amusement'] that we have give you, brudder Mole, nor nuffin for this bewful moral lesson agin greed of gold. So no more jes' at presen from your own brudder,

"CESAR HANNIBAL A. JEX,

"Common known as Sunday."

"Done for!" groaned Mole, as he concluded this singular composition.

"Yes, sar, done brown, not black, sar."

Tinker was there at the entrance to the tent, nodding and grinning.

"Done for, Massa Mole, sar. Done for bewful luscious brown. Yes, sar."

Mr. Mole used a naughty word, and rushed at him.

But Tinker was off.

And when he got out he saw young Jack, Harry Girdwood and Tinker, stepping out towards the settlement at a smart pace.

"Ha—ha—ha!"

The laughter of those mirth-loving young practical jokers rang in his ears, and caused him the most lively apprehensions.

"It will never do to let them carry that tale to the settlement," said Mr. Mole. "I shall never hear the last of it. I best mend better my pre-

mise the matter with them. Join in the laugh at my own expense. Ugh!"

This was a pill to swallow; but he got it down as best he could, and made up his mind promptly.

* * * * *

"Here he comes."

"Mole?"

"Yes."

"Shall we run?"

"Yes, sar," responded Tinker. "Dis bewful infant means to bolt."

"Stop a bit," said Harry Girdwood, looking back; "whatever is he after now?"

They turned around, and saw Mr. Mole coming along as fast as he could stump it, and waving a white pocket-handkerchief at them as he came.

"A flag of truce, by the living jingo!" exclaimed Jack.

"So it is."

"He's afraid of the chaff."

"I see gwine!" cried Tinker. "Me not let him catch dis nice infant."

"Stop—stop!"

But Tinker was not to be coaxed into this.

He had not got the same faith in a flag of truce as his more civilized companions, and he was already back in the settlement with Sunday and Monday, while Mr. Mole came on chatting with the two boys, making the best of his misfortune.

CHAPTER XVI.

MOLE LEADS A RELIEF PARTY IN SEARCH OF OLD JACK.

WHEN the settlement was reached, there was a discussion going forward which turned them all from gay to grave at once.

Bad news had arrived about the absent friends.

A messenger had come in from Harkaway, announcing the unfortunate death of the brave Jefferson.

Sunday and Monday were holding a meeting with several of the most trustworthy of the settlers, and volunteers were invited to join a relief party.

Young Jack and his brave companion, Harry, would fain have gone with the party, but this could not be entertained for a moment.

Somebody must remain to guard the settlement, for it was just possible that the bushrangers, who were known to be very numerous, would discover the comparative weakness of the place, if a sufficient guard were not kept.

In that case, in all probability, they would make a descent upon them, and take them by surprise.

As Tinker—whose advice, although couched in his own peculiar phraseology, was invaluable now—explained to them, the bushrangers knew the country so much better than the settlers, that it would be comparatively easy for them to detach a party and send them down upon the unprotected people at home.

They had plenty of men for the service.

"Somebody must command here," said Mr. Mole.

The old gentleman quite forgot his little personal grievances in this state of affairs.

"Of course," said Harry Girdwood; "there must be a leader that we can all look up to."

"What do you say to Mr. Mole?" suggested one of the men.

"Not I," returned Mole; "I am going after our dear friends, to see if I can take one life for poor Jefferson's."

"You are going with the volunteers?" said Harry.

"Yes."

"You must not, sir," said young Jack.

"I shall!"

His voice and manner showed a degree of firmness to which they had not been accustomed.

And, indeed, do what they would to move him, it was of no avail.

He was as firm as a rock.

All his old eccentricities of character seemed to vanish before the alarming state of things which the messenger of ill had brought them.

"Well, then," said one of the settlers, "who is to be named leader here while you are all away?"

"Let us vote."

"Good!"

"I propose that Jack Harkaway, junior, shall be nominated," said Mr. Mole. "He's a very young man for the post, you may say, but he is a worthy son of a worthy father, and I would not let his mother's tricks be his father's hard-earned money."

It was put to the vote, and carried unanimously.

Mr. Mole needed no better revenge than this if he could only have thought it, but his mind was full of more serious matters, for the generous eulogies pronounced by the old gentleman made our hero feel very uncomfortable over his share in their little wickedness of the gold-mine hoax.

"And now we're off," said Mr. Mole, shouldering his rifle.

"Already?"

"No time like the present," replied the old gentleman; "besides, who knows what is going on now? Who can say what sort of a fix our poor boys are in?"

"On we go," said the volunteers, eagerly.

"Keep a careful watch, Jack."

"I will, sir."

"Mind your sentries are posted everywhere, and frequently relieved."

"Trust me, sir."

"I do, my boy, I do," said Mr. Mole, shaking his hand warmly. "God bless you. Right about face, quick—march!"

And off they marched, the remaining settlers sending a ringing cheer after them to help them on their way.

CHAPTER XVII.

HUNSTON'S PUNISHMENT—HIS COMRADES JUDGE AND CONDEMN HIM—THE EXECUTION.

HUNSTON was badly hurt in the fatal fight.

But not dead.

As he lay stretched upon the ground surrounded by the dead and dying, he dare not move hand or foot lest they should revenge upon him the death of Jefferson.

But when the triumphant enemy had moved a little way off to pay the last sad tribute of respect to their lion-hearted dead, Hunston contrived to crawl into the low brushwood and hide himself.

Here he lay, a prey to the most violent anguish of his wound, and devoured by fever.

He would have given anything for one drop of water.

Hour after hour, he lay there parched—choking.

And when some hours had thus gone by, his sufferings, instead of diminishing, were terribly increased by the anguish of his arm.

The mechanical limb seemed like a ton weight dragging upon him.

And up that shoulder shot sharp burning pains that made him cry out in spite of himself, so cruelly poignant were his sufferings.

He tried to free himself from the arm, but vainly.

Whether it was that in his agony he did not go to work in the right way, or whether from weakness or the confined space in which he lay concealed, he could not move it.

The old superstitious feeling came back.

He felt that the murdered Emmerson's legacy of fate was at last dragging him down.

"It's all over now," muttered the guilty man, himself; "all over, and Emmerson will not be deceived; he must have his hand in my last moments. Oh, if I could but drag it off—ugh!"

A fearful groan escaped him, and he sank back half lifeless.

He remained in a state of semi-stupor for half an hour or more, and as his consciousness came back, his pains returned with more than their former force.

"I was a fool to hide away," he murmured. "If I had remained in sight, they would have caught me at once, and I shouldn't be now dying a martyr of torture. Oh, that some one would come and put the finishing stroke to me now."

Probably were the words uttered when he heard the sound of voices near at hand.

Familiar voices, too.

"There's the spot, Captain Morgan; and see here, captain."

It was one of the men who had taken part in the late encounter with Harkaway and his party.

The only one who had got off comparatively free.

This man had fled in good time, and coming to accident across Captain Morgan, had related the fact in the most favorable light for himself.

He had run away, according to his own account, simply because he was not sure whether Hunston was a traitor under orders or not.

This last Captain Morgan on his tender side.

He was a stout, fleshy man, and most jealous of his position, being usurped by any-

one who would not acknowledge the notorious bushranger, Hunston, as his superior.

"Yes, captain," replied his informant, "six that we know of."

"I wish we had only got Master Hunston here," said Morgan, bitterly; "he should not have much chance of taking such a job upon himself again."

Hunston heard every word of this quite distinctly.

"He can't have got far, captain."

"Why not?"

"He was badly hurt."

"So much the better."

Hunston winced.

There was not much hope or comfort in this for him.

"Call your men, Barker," said Morgan, "and let them look after this Hunston."

The bushranger's men were summoned, and then an active search for Hunston began.

They were not long in routing him out, and he was brought before Morgan to be tried and answer for the calamity he had caused.

"Now," said Morgan, "what have you to say for yourself?"

"Only this," replied Hunston faintly, for he was exhausted with his sufferings; "I have lost my life in fighting in your cause."

"That's false," retorted Morgan. "You sacrificed my men in trying to gratify your own private spite."

"And yours."

"My affairs had no place in your mind," said Morgan, sternly, "and you know it."

"Haven't I paid the penalty for it?" said Hunston. "I am done for."

"Not yet, but you may be. Hark you, my men, this fellow has come amongst us to sacrifice the lives of our comrades for his own purposes. He tried to torture a man to death. Now, Harkaway is no friend of ours."

"No—no."

"True, he is not, but we are men, not cannibals or wild Indians. We can kill our enemies in fair fight, but not bury them alive."

"No—no."

"What shall we do to him for this?" said Morgan. "What can we do to him for causing the deaths of so many of our best and bravest comrades?"

No answer came.

"Speak."

The men were still silent, and Hunston began feebly to hope.

"Is hanging too good for him? It is, but we must show him more mercy than he would show to his enemies. Who has the rope?"

One was speedily brought.

Hunston never said a word.

A sickening dread had fallen upon him, but he knew well that no appeals for mercy would be entertained by these men.

He merited none.

One end of the rope was cast over the branch of a tree, and a noose was made in it.

The arms of the condemned man were fastened behind him.

The noose was placed around his neck.

A slight tremor of the neck was perceptible as the fatal cord touched his flesh, but he said nothing.

A dull, settled look was upon his face, and strange to relate, at this awful moment, he had quite forgotten the present, and was back in the past.

All the events of his old life passed in rapid succession before his eyes, and pang after pang of regret shot through his hardened heart.

"Have you anything to say?" demanded the bushranger.

No reply.

"Sulky, are you?" said Morgan, brutally. "We'll cure that for you. Pull away, lads."

The next moment Hunston was dangling in the air.

CHAPTER XVIII.

MEETING WITH HARKAWAY'S PARTY—THE SCOUTS AND THEIR NEWS—A BRUSH WITH THE BUSHRANGERS—HOT WORK—HOW MOLE KEPT HIS ENGAGEMENT.

MOLE's party made forced marches until they came up with Harkaway and the rest of them.

We pass over the warm greetings which were exchanged—the eager inquiries that went forward on either side.

"I'm very glad to see you, old friend," said Harkaway to Mr. Mole, "but yet sorry that you should have ventured out on such an adventure as this."

"My dear Harkaway," replied his old friend, "Isaac Mole knows how to take care of himself."

"Of course."

"He flatters himself that he never shrinks from work when a friend is in danger," said Mr. Mole, with a touch of his old dignity, "but I hope to show you, Harvey, that I have yet some steam left in me."

"I don't doubt it for a moment, sir," said Harvey.

"I'm afraid you do."

"No—no."

"You wouldn't be here, sir," said Harkaway, "if you hadn't got as much of the old fire in you as ever."

This gratified Mr. Mole more than anything. While they were engaged in this conversation, there was a wild "whoop" or cry, and a black man, dressed in a small pocket-handkerchief only, bounded up to the spot.

Mr. Mole jumped back.

"What's this?"

"It is Wangi, a scout we have engaged," replied Harkaway. "He knows Tinker, and all about Morgan and his men."

"Is he reliable?" asked the cautious Mole.

"Quite."

Wangi was a bright specimen of an ugly race, and he was full of intelligence.

They had come across him just at the right moment, for the bushrangers had been ill-treating the unfortunate fellow, and he was smarting under a sense of injury, both physical and moral.

He had been so kindly used by the Harkaway party that he was eager to render them every possible service.

"Well, Wangi," said old Jack, "what have you discovered this time?"

"Morgan warrior close," replied the scout, pointing to the direction he had come from.

"How far?"

"Close—so close."

"The dence he is. Are they in force—many warriors there with him?"

"Four—six—ten."

"Ten?"

"Yes."

"And Morgan, that makes eleven."

"Morgan can count for three," said Dick: "he's quite as good as three of the others."

"Quite."

"Then Morgan, the great bushranger, shall be my especial care," said Mole, pompously.

"Oh!"

Harkaway thought it over seriously a while.

"Yes," he said, with an air of resolution, "let us go on; we must exterminate these miscreants."

The scout now explained that the bushranger had caught one of the Harkaway party, and were about to make short work of him.

"You are wrong there," replied Harkaway, "we are all here present."

The scout explained that it was at any rate an enemy of theirs, and a white man—hence his reason for presuming it to be a member of the Harkaway expedition.

"Perhaps it is one of Morgan's band."

"No friend—no bushranger," said Wangi, with a positive air. "Catch—catch—"

"Oh, they caught him, did they?"

"Yes. In the bush; all bad—so bad."

"What, wounded?"

"Yes."

"This is very strange," said Harkaway; "let us hurry forward."

"There's some ugliness going forward," said Harvey, "and we are bound to be in it."

"And as for this Captain Morgan," said Mr. Mole, with a swagger, "let him look out."

"They hurried forward, and after a rapid march, the scouts came running back with warning gestures."

"They are hanging a man," said one.

"Hanging?" ejaculated Harkaway.

"Yes."

"Do you know their unfortunate victim?"

"No."

"Is Morgan there?"

"Yes," replied the scout, "and a big, foreign-looking fellow, who must be the Italian brigand chap I have heard so much about."

"Tango?"

"Yes."

"Come along, then. We have got our work to do," said Harkaway, as he loosened his pistols in his belt, so as to be ready for use.

They crept up noiselessly until they were within twenty feet of the bushrangers.

Then, upon a pre-arranged signal, they fired a volley and rushed on.

The bushrangers were taken by surprise. Then a sharp command, and Morgan's voice was heard in the distance.

"You white-haired scoundrels," he cried,

turning around indignantly, for he found himself alone in the open.

He saw the enemy coming down upon him in all directions, and he never attempted to move, but boldly faced them.

This example was soon followed by his men in very shame; back they came to the support of their chief.

There was a momentary pause, and the bushranger chief was the first of his party to break ground.

He cocked his rifle, and bringing it up to his shoulder, was just upon the point of delivering his fire, when Mr. Mole stumped forward and hurled his hat at him.

It served the purpose of putting him off his aim.

Else Dick Harvey would not have lived to join farther in the encounter, for the bushranger's aim was deadly, and he meant the shot for Dick. Now, while they were variously engaged thus, Harkaway rushed to the tree where the wretched Hunston was dangling, and cut down the body.

At the self-same instant a shot was fired which entered the right breast of Hunston.

At the same time, Captain Morgan made a rush at his assailant—Mr. Mole—and being as active as he was vigorous, he soon toppled the old man over.

Mole was awfully frightened; but he clutched his rifle tenaciously, and swinging it around his head, he brought it down with tremendous force on Morgan's arm.

The next moment Mole pulled the trigger, and then fell backwards.

"Bang!"

At the self-same instant, the bushranger chief-tain was heard to groan, and clapping his hand suddenly on his chest, he staggered and fell.

Dead!

Yes, the redoubtable bushranger, Captain Morgan, was dead.

And his conqueror was Isaac Mole.

CHAPTER XIX.

SUNDAY'S LAST STRUGGLE WITH TORO—VICTORY.

MR. MOLE soon realized the fact of his victory, and he was not slow to take advantage of it, for he was not the man to lose a bit of any possible glory in such a stroke.

"Behold, I have finished Captain Morgan!" he cried, as he got up from the ground; "now smite the rest of the villains—smite 'em, hip aa' thigh; charge!"

There was a cheer from the settlers.

The bushrangers turned tail on seeing their leader fall, and fled precipitately, just as Toro appeared on the scene.

"Harvey," cried Harkaway, holding Hunston in his arms, "look at this wreck of a man. Wangi," he added, to the scout, "bring me some water. He is not dead; he has only fainted, I think."

With infinite pains they brought Hunston to consciousness.

And while Harkaway held his old enemy in his arms, Harvey, Mole and Monday followed the defeated bushrangers closely up.

A regular panic had seized upon them, and they fled madly.

In vain did Toro endeavor to rally them.

The Italian bully, with all his many defects, was no coward, and he was wild with rage and excitement at their ignominious flight.

"Stop, cowards!" he cried; "stop—stand and face them!"

On they fled—faster than ever.

"Curse your white livers!" he cried; "go then and leave me. If you are afraid, I am not. I'll show you how a brave man can face his enemies."

This heroic speech had no effect whatever upon them.

They increased their speed and disappeared.

Toro launched one final curse after them and turned to face the foe.

On came the Englishmen, and with them the two darkeys, Sunday and Monday.

"Don't fire," cried Dick, who could not help admiring the boldness of the Italian ruffian.

"We sha'n't take him alive," said Monday.

"I know it," returned Harvey; "but give him a chance, as we are four to one. Leave him to me."

"No," said Monday; "he'll be long of it."

"He'll be long of it," said Harvey; "but give him a chance, as we are four to one. Leave him to me."

"No," said Monday; "he'll be long of it."

"He'll be long of it," said Harvey; "but give him a chance, as we are four to one. Leave him to me."

"No," said Monday; "he'll be long of it."

"He'll be long of it," said Harvey; "but give him a chance, as we are four to one. Leave him to me."

"No," said Monday; "he'll be long of it."

bondage of slavery; but I have learnt since then to feel like a man, and I will see to him now; so stand back."

And then, before they could offer a word of remonstrance or objection, the sturdy negro rushed forward alone.

Now, Sunday had nothing better to help him in his encounter with so redoubtable an antagonist than a short dagger-knife and stout heart.

But he never quailed an instant.

"I've come to fetch you, Toro," said the darkey, boldly; "so give in quietly."

Toro made no reply.

The audacity annoyed him.

So much so, in fact, that he was in a measure taken by surprise when the bold darkey leaped upon him, knife in hand.

"Take dat."

Toro got it.

The knife had only about five inches of blade, but the Italian got it all, up to the very hilt, in his shoulder.

With a cry of rage and pain, the Italian closed with his adversary, and grabbed at the knife.

But Sunday was ready.

Wrenching the knife away with his whole force, he severed the fingers of Toro's right hand, and jabbed away again viciously.

This second blow took effect in his cheek, inflicting a hideous-looking wound, which was not, however, so serious as the former blow.

Toro shook himself free, and swinging around his brawny arm, he dealt the luckless negro a terrific blow which floored him.

The spectators gave a cry of alarm at this.

Their man was done for.

The Italian fell upon him with his whole weight, half crushing the luckless black.

But what Sunday wanted in strength, was fully compensated for in extra activity, and he grappled eagerly with the foe.

A desperate and fatal struggle ensued.

Over and over they rolled the Italian hammering away at poor Sunday's head in a way that threatened to batter his skull in.

But a negro's skull is proverbially thick.

Sunday's was no exception to the rule.

He took his punishment without any particular noise, never attempting to dodge a blow, but giving his sole attention to that ugly little knife.

And as they rolled over, he stabbed and stabbed again with such a fierce energy, that the Italian's huge body, was a mass of wounds.

At length, Toro seized the unhappy Sunday with his left hand, and holding him momentarily at arm's length, he dealt him one slaughtering stroke that sent him lifeless to the earth.

But this was Toro's final effort, and almost at the same moment, he shook all over and fell across his lifeless antagonist with a dull, hollow groan.

Harvey rushed forward to raise the negro, but first they had to drag the giant Italian off him.

Toro offered no resistance now.

He slid through their hands to the ground, and as he lay on his back, he looked towards the lifeless negro with a sickly smile of triumph, and so his features grew rigid with the horrible look upon them.

"He's dead," exclaimed Mole, in an awe-stricken tone.

It was true.

The redoubtable brigand Toro had seen his last skirmish.

He would never trouble any one of his enemies more.

* * * * *

"Poor Sunday!"

"He's only swooning."

"I fear not."

Sunday showed that the latter speaker's fear was justified, for as the words were spoken, he opened his eyes.

"Whar's de big beast?"

"Hush, Sunday," said Mr. Mole; "it's all over. The wretched, misguided creature is dead."

"And a good thing too—serve him right," responded Sunday, heartily.

He scrambled on to his feet, but he was what fighting men know as "groggy," and could hardly keep up.

His head was swollen to twice its ordinary dimensions, and his body was knocked into a jelly.

Yet the stout-hearted darkey never thought of his own hurts when he looked at his stalwart opponent, lately so full of life and vigor, now stiffening in death.

They were old enemies, and Sunday, although not brutal by nature, could not help chuckling at his victory.

CHAPTER XX.

HUNSTON'S LAST MOMENTS—HARKAWAY'S GENEROSITY—SAD MEMORIES AND BITTER REGRETS—EMMERSON IS AVENGED AT LAST—THE LEGEND ON THE MECHANICAL ARM IS FULFILLED—THE DEATH OF HUNSTON.

"HUNSTON, come, look up, man."

Hunston opened his eyes, and looked wildly about him.

"Where am I?"

"Here, with Harkaway, your old school-fellow, Jack. Say, how is it with you now?"

Hunston glanced upwards, and his eyes rested upon his old schoolfellow and college chum, the man he had so cruelly wronged and plotted against throughout his misspent career.

"Is it you, Harkaway, or do my eyes deceive me?"

"No," replied old Jack, sadly, "I am here, Hunston, here with you to help you, old fellow, if I can."

Hunston's head was resting upon Harkaway's knee, but he could not believe that this was a proof of his old enemy's forgiveness.

His evil nature could not comprehend such nobleness of heart.

"I am in your power, Harkaway," he said, "but not for long—no, not for long."

"Hush!" said old Jack. "Don't talk like that now. Tell me what I can do for you."

"Do for me?" repeated Hunston, vaguely.

"Nothing; they have done for me without your assistance this time. No—no, nothing, Emmerson has done it."

And he pressed his shoulder above the mechanical arm.

"Emmerson?" said Harkaway.

"Yes."

"What mean you?"

"His legacy has avenged him," responded Hunston. "I feel the subtle poison coursing through my veins. Nothing could save me.

Sooner or later Robert Emmerson was to be avenged. I have escaped the knife, the bullet and the rope. I could laugh at them all, for I knew that I bore a charmed life, and that nothing could touch me—nothing but Robert Emmerson.

His cursed skill has done for me, and it has baffled the greatest doctors, one and all. The legend on the arm is fulfilled. I am paying the forfeit of a life's misdeeds, but not to you, Harkaway, not to you; it is the poison in the arm."

The look upon the wretched man's face told such a piteous tale, that Harkaway turned his head away, visibly affected.

"You have got the best of it, Harkaway," pursued the dying man, speaking now with evident difficulty; "but the wretched glory of conquering a poor outcast like me doesn't belong to you; it belongs to the dead and gone—to Robert Emmerson, not to Morgan, either. You'll look after Morgan, Harkaway?"

When one upon whom death had already set his seal talked in this strain, it was inexpressibly shocking.

Harkaway turned his head away and sighed.

"You can spare Morgan your enmity now Hunston," he said, seriously.

"Why?"

"He has gone before you."

"Dead?"

"Yes."

"You are deceiving me," said the dying man, sharply.

"Why should I? I tell you Morgan has already paid the forfeit of his crimes. He is dead."

Hunston's eyes sparkled with evident satisfaction at this intelligence.

"That's brave news," he said. "I shall cheat you all—Morgan—you—all—all but Emmerson. He is not to be balked. I feel the deadly influence of his work stealing around my heart, and crushing the life out of me slowly—slowly, but, ah, how surely!"

His voice grew fainter yet, and Harkaway moistened his lips with the water that Wangi had brought.

This gentle action evidently surprised the suffering man.

"Come—come, Hunston," said Harkaway, in a kind voice, "tell me if there is anything that I can do for you?"

"You are mocking me," said the dying man.

"Not I, by heaven!"

"Is it indeed possible, Harkaway, that you can forgive such a guilty wretch as I am—that you can pardon all the evil I have wrought against you and yours?"

"I can," returned Harkaway, "I can and do, freely."

"Do you forgive my last act of cruelty?"

"I do; don't speak of it," said Harkaway, gently.

"You are the most wonderful of men," faltered Hunston; "too good, too noble-minded for a base nature like mine to understand. Ah, Harkaway, what a different being I might have been had I been able to resist my evil instincts as a boy. Contact with you should have elevated me, and brought me to something better than this. But no, it seemed only to tend to the very opposite direction. The better you were, the more generous and forgiving, the viler and baser I became."

"Oh, Jack—Jack!" he exclaimed, in bitter remorse; "oh, if I could only wake up to find that it had all been a dream! But no—no, Jack, death is stealing around me now, and will not this time be shook away."

And then a sudden change came over his face.

"Jack, I am thinking now of our school days! Ah, Jack, if those times could come again, how different I would act to you and yours!"

He held out his hand to Harkaway.

"Jack—I must call you Jack, now—hold my head higher, Jack—there."

His voice grew fainter and fainter.

"Will your wife forgive me?" he murmured.

"Yes—yes."

"And your boy, and Dick Harvey, and Mr. Mole?"

"All—all, willingly, freely," returned Harkaway, much affected.

"Bless you for those words of comfort! I—pay my debt," he went on, speaking with the greatest difficulty, "my debt to all."

Then, after a moment, he said, faintly:

"Jack, pray for me; ask your wife, Emily, to pray for me."

And with these words upon his lips, his head dropped upon Harkaway's knee, and all was over. Hunston fell back dead, in his old school-fellow's arms.

CHAPTER XXI.

THE END OF THE BUSHRANGERS—HOW TINKER LED HIS PARTY TO A BLOODLESS VICTORY—A SIGNAL TRIUMPH.

"BEHOLD, all of you, Captain Morgan is dead, and it is I—Mole—that have done the daring deed," said Mr. Mole, with a self-satisfied air; "and I feel comparatively at rest, having rid the country of such pests."

"You?"

"Yes, I alone!"

His hearers stared at the cool audacity of the old gentleman.

He did not scruple to assume the honors and glory of all that had been done.

"Yes," he added complacently, while the rest stared and waited for a whacker; "I never did a thing better than this job, perhaps, and that is saying something."

"Yes," added Harkaway, drily; "it is certainly saying something."

"It has always been my principle," said Mr. Mole, looking around him for admiration, "when I take a job in hand of this kind, to finish it right off. Nip 'em in the bud, sirs."

"Bravo!" cried young Jack.

"Cut 'em up root and branch, no half measures."

"Hear—hear!"

While Mr. Mole continued blowing his own trumpet in the most brazen manner, young Jack whispered a word or two to Tinker.

The latter grinned and disappeared.

"You mustn't suppose," said Mole, with a sort of deprecating smile, "that I think I have done all by sheer force of arms."

"Oh, you are too modest," said old Jack, winking at Harvey.

"Oh, no."

"Well, now that is a very manly and generous admission," said Dick.

"Ahem! I know as well as you do that the name of Mole has gone for something, that it lent a sort of moral weight to our expedition. A good leader's name is a tower of strength. The bushrangers had their spies, and when it became known that Isaac Mole was in command, I leave you to guess how completely they became demoralized."

"No doubt."

"Oh, of course they would fear you," said Harvey.

"In fact, if I had this job to do again, I should merely let it go forth that Isaac Mole commanded the party, and then I should—"

"Down with old Mole!" cried a strange voice from the bush.

"Prepare your firearms. The bushrangers are on us," shouted Jack.

A couple of rifle shots followed.

Then came a great shout.

"Down with Mole!"

"Oh, Lor'! oh, Lor'!" exclaimed poor old Mole; "where shall I get to?"

It was royal fun to see him stump away; in fact, you could hardly understand how he got over the ground at such a rate.

And as he disappeared, Tinker came out of the cover, followed by Sunday and Monday.

"Gollopshus great big lark!" said Tinker, holding his sides, and grinning.

"Ha-ha-ha!"

"But the point is," said Rook, "that the bushrangers are by no means exterminated."

"Ay, but the one or two that yet remain are dispersed, and will never gather together again about this part of the country."

"There's the rub," said Rook. "I'm told that five of the leading men after Captain Morgan are encamped up at the creek yonder."

"Never."

"It is true."

"Do you think they mean mischief, then?"

"Undoubtedly; they are by no means so demoralized as Mr. Mole would make us believe."

"Me know whar to find de beggars, sar," said Tinker.

"You do?"

"And could lead us there."

"Believe yar, my boy," responded Tinker; "walk up behind 'em, too; take immense dam big salt box, sar, and put a pinch on dere bressed tails."

"Bravo!"

"Let us keep this job to ourselves," said Harvey, "or we shall alarm the ladies again."

"Good."

"Who shall go?"

"You and I," said Harkaway, "and Rook."

"Yes," said the latter, eagerly, "I'll go."

"An' me too," said Tinker, "me go and put all de lot in a bag—a bressed big gollopshus bag, sir."

"Come along then, off we go," said Harkaway, who was all impatience to get to work, as usual, when once the thing was decided upon.

Tinker led the way, and the three combatant members of the expedition followed.

Each man had his rifle slung behind his back.

In their hands they carried each a brace of pistols.

It was necessary, for the sake of precaution, to reach the creek by a circuitous route, and this involved a considerable loss of time.

But the black boy Tinker proved to be a model scout.

Every inch of the ground was known to him.

After a long march their patience was rewarded.

Tinker, who was marching on about twenty yards ahead of the party, turned around to them, and pointing to a thicket at no great distance, motioned to them, inviting the greatest caution and prudence.

The critical moment was fast approaching.

As they drew near the thicket, they saw the gray smoke curling up above the shrubs, and they understood now that they must prepare for some stiffish work.

It proved to be less serious than they anticipated.

They opened out, and each of them took up a separate post, and in this way they advanced and pushed their way through the bushes.

The bushrangers, who were five in number, were, as might be seen at a glance, worn out by the recent fatigues which they had undergone.

Four of them were stretched upon the ground around the wood fire, wrapped in their rugs, asleep.

The fifth, who was mounting guard, had been overtaken also by slumber, and was resting in a state of semi-drowsiness upon his rifle.

Tinker made this man his mark at once.

Creeping like a tiger up behind him, he dealt him one alarming blow with a heavy wooden club upon the back of the head.

And down dropped this untrustworthy sentinel like a log.

Tinker leaped upon him.

He had a rope all ready to hand with a running noose in it, and this he slipped over his shoulders, fixing his hands down to his sides immovably.

The noise, slight as it was, sufficed to arouse the sleepers, and when they opened their eyes, they found themselves faced by three armed men.

Three desperate men, each holding a brace of pistols.

"Move a step, either of you," said Rook, "and we fire."

"Wake up, men; help!"

"Another word, a sound, and it is your last utterance."

Now the bushrangers were not wanting in courage, but they were complete overmatched.

"Yield!"

"Never to you!" cried the man.

"Hold your tongue, Morris," said Rook, unceremoniously. "You have no chance, and you had better take it quietly."

The bushranger never uttered another word.

He was completely bewildered.

"Tinker."

"Yes, sar."

"Bring a rope."

"Yes, sar."

"Tie him up."

"Yes, sir, I will, sar; dis chile do it awful double quick."

He dropped down upon the bushranger Morris, and in spite of his resistance, succeeded in fastening his arms as securely as he had done those of the unfortunate sentry.

To secure the others was the work of a very few minutes.

What could they do?"

Nothing.

They were surprised—utterly—hopelessly taken at a disadvantage.

"Now get up and march," said Harkaway.

They obeyed.

To hesitate was dangerous, seeing that they were faced by three armed men, not to speak of Tinker, who, in his excitement, was really no mean adversary.

"Wake up, you warmint," said Tinker, giving the insensible sentry a kick.

As this failed to arouse him, the dose was repeated, until the man was brought around.

And when they were all upon their feet, Tinker started them by prodding them on their respective rears with a wooden spear he carried.

"What are you going to do with us?" demanded the bushranger, Morris, sullenly.

"Put you in a place of safety," responded Rook.

"What!" echoed Morris, recognising the speaker for the first time, "is it you, Rook?"

"As you see."

"Traitor!"

"That's false," said Rook; "I am no traitor. I was never one of you. I was forced into playing a loathsome part. Morgan turned traitor to me. If ever I owed him and you any allegiance, that freed me."

"Where would you take us?"

"Where you will be unable to do any further mischief."

"Then we had better fight it out here, comrades," said the bushranger, suddenly facing around.

"No; you had not," retorted Rook. "Not if you are prudent. Your lives are safe. Resist, and they will not be so long."

"Curse your luck," growled one of the prisoners; "we have no help for it."

"None."

"March," said Harvey; "I'm getting tired of this."

"Spikey," cried Tinker, inserting about an inch of his wooden spear in the sentry's back.

"Oho!"

"March."

And march they did.

In this way they were taken back to the settlement, and thence to the town, where they were handed over to the proper authorities, to be dealt with by them as they deserved.

Everybody was full of the exploit, which virtually concluded the deeds of daring of the Harkaway colony, as far as we are concerned.

It also stamped out the band of Morgan the bushranger most effectually.

CHAPTER THE LAST.

ENGLAND ONCE MORE—FUTURE PROSPECTS AND PROMISES—FAREWELL.

"I AM heart-sick of this place," said Harkaway. "But I haven't come across a spot that I like more than the

"Land that bears a well-known name."

as the song says, and back I go."

"To England?"

"Where else?"

"And what about Harkawayville?" demanded Harvey.

"Leave it where it is. Pick out the most intelligent of the settlers for the high post—give Rook a chance of doing better things now that he is convalescent—and hurrah!"

Old England! The associations of the place are too sad, now. Poor Hunston's sad fate I can never forget if I remain here. His grave shall be well cared for, by the best man I can find, for I shall remember that he was once my playmate and school-fellow."

So it was agreed that they should return at an early date.

"My boy, Tinker, must go with us, dad."

"Of course," said Harkaway, to his son.

"I couldn't do without my boy Tinker," said young Jack.

"Of course not."

"Why, what with Mike and Nero and Tinker," said Mr. Mole, "you'll have quite a menagerie."

The preparations for the return of our friends to England were necessarily rather lengthy.

But at length the day arrived, and the whole settlement trooped down in a body to the seaport to see the embarkation of the party.

Cheers, hurrahs, and signs of regret were sent after them.

But not one of the settlers from Harkawayville but wished them all God speed.

And now Harkaway and his son have completed their journey together, we and they make our respective bows to the courteous readers who have so long borne us company.

[THE END.]

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